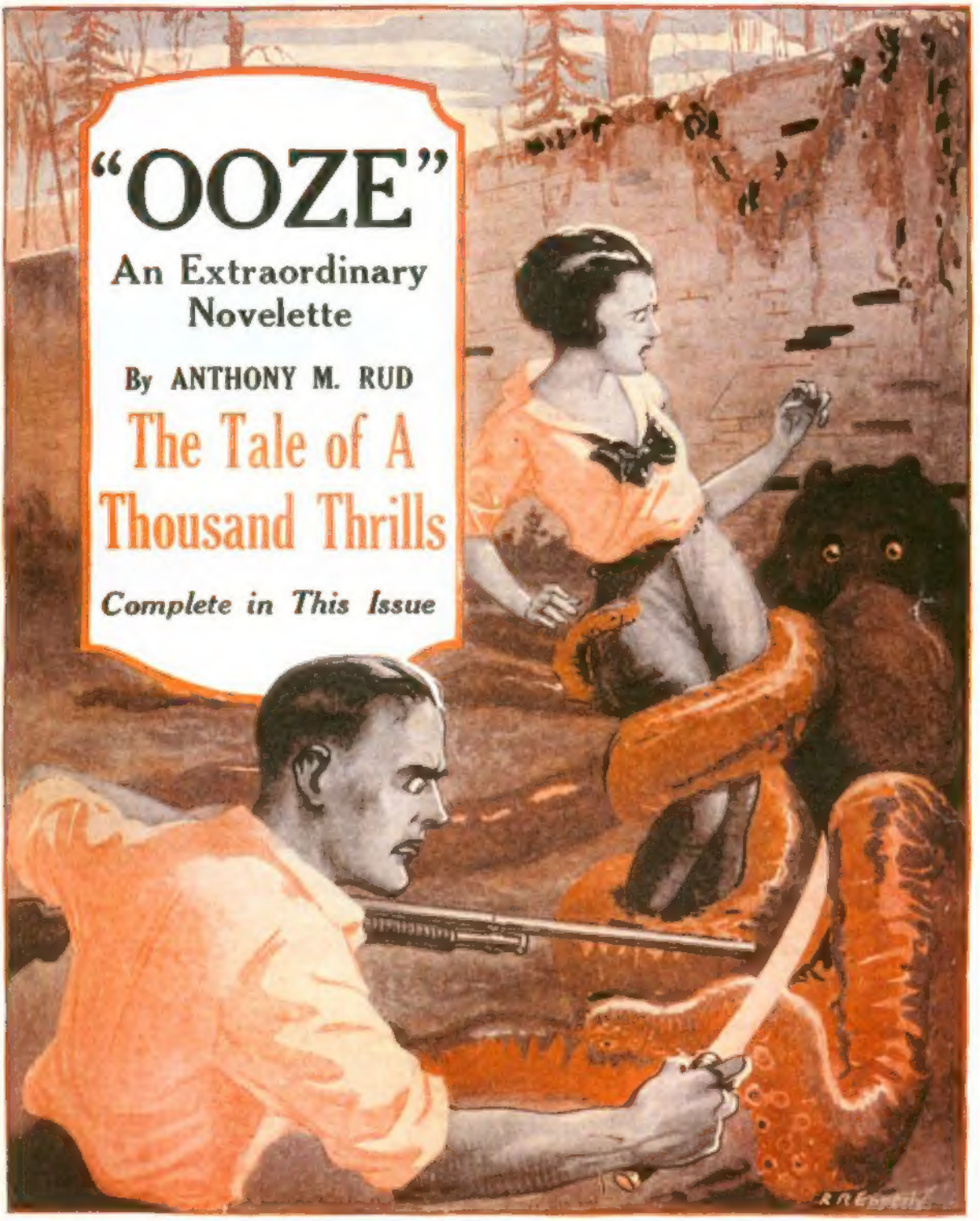
WEIRD TALES

Printed in U. S. A.

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1923

25 Cents



Can you do this with your Shaving Cream Cap—

or do you do this?

YOU know how loose caps will slip through your fingers just when minutes are most precious. You can't lose the Williams' cap. It's always on—*hinged* on. And the tube hangs on.

Time-saver though the hinged cap is—it is a detail for speed compared with the lather. Williams' Shaving Cream bulks *instantly* into rich, busy lather—not suds. This lather so softens and lubricates your skin that the razor seems to "glide" the hairs off. And besides being a faster beard-softener, it has a decidedly beneficial effect on the skin.

Williams' is white and absolutely pure. It contains no coloring matter whatsoever. Truly, you will find it the perfect cream in the perfect container.

THE J. B. WILLIAMS COMPANY, Glastonbury, Conn.
Made in Canada at Montreal, by The J. B. Williams Co., Ltd.

For men who prefer the stick, Williams' Doublecap (absolutely new) and Williams' Holder Top Stick (the original holder stick) give the genuine Williams' in the most convenient stick forms. There are Re-loads for both.

Williams' Shaving Cream

Get Ready For a Big Pay Job

Be an Electrical Expert

Men like you are needed right now to fill big-paying jobs in the electrical field. There never was a time when opportunities for money-making were as good as they are now. Good jobs are open everywhere to men who know "what's what." Electrical Experts earn from $12 to $30 a day. Even the ordinary electricians get top-notch pay. Why don't you get in on this and get a real man's size job now? With my simplified Electrical Course I can quickly fit you to hold one. Read W. E. Pence's letter below. This is only one of thousands of such letters I have received.

Earn $75 to $200 a Week

You Can Be a Big Money Maker

I have trained over 20,000 men in electricity—thousands of successful men all over the world attribute their success to my training. I can make you successful too. In fact I will guarantee your success. If you will follow my home study course you can become an expert, drawing a fat salary, in the same time it takes you to get a little raise in the work you are doing now.

Jumps From $125 A Month to $750 and Over

READ the Story of W. E. Pence

W. E. Pence in his working togs

Chehalis, Wash., Oct. 9.

Mr Cooke:—

When I enrolled with you less than a year ago I was a common mechanic earning $25 to $30 a week. Today I am an "Electrical Expert" with a business of my own that gives me a clear profit of over $750 a month.

I have more work than I can do. The people around Chehalis come to me to fix their starters, generators and ignition troubles because they know that I know how to do it right.

My success, I owe to you, Mr. Cooke. The thorough practical training which you gave me through your Easily-learned Home Study Course in Electricity has made me an independent, highly respected business man in this community. Sincerely yours, W. E. Pence

Age or Lack of Education No Handicap

No matter how old or how young you are, or what education you have, there is a real future for you in electricity. If you can read and write I can put you on the road to success. I can help you to a position that will make people admire you and look up to you.

Cash In on Your Spare Time

Use your spare time to get a better job. Most of us have enough spare time every day to sell a little at about $10.00 an hour. Sell some to yourself at this price. Watch how quick you will earn the money back if you put the time into study.

Electrical Working Outfit Free

Every man who enrolls for my electrical course gets a big outfit of tools, material and instruments free. This includes an electric motor and other things not usually found in a beginners outfit. These are the same tools and the same material you will use later in your work. Everything practical and good right from the start.

I Guarantee Your Complete Satisfaction

I am so sure I can make a big pay electrical expert out of you that I guarantee your success. I agree under bond to return every cent you pay me for tuition when you have finished the course, if you are not satisfied that it is the best investment you have ever made. If you don't make good, this million dollar institution will.

Act Right Now

Let me send you my big free book giving details of the opportunities electricity offers you and a sample lesson also free. Mail the coupon and get this at once. Learn how other men "got themselves ready to hold good paying jobs" and how I can help you do the same. This is your big chance—take it.

L. L. Cooke
Chief Engineer, Chicago Engineering Works,
Dept. 179, 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Send at once Sample Lessons, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course—all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS, Dept. 179
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

WEIRD TALES

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

EDWIN BAIRD, Editor

Published monthly by the RURAL PUBLISHING CORPORATION, 334 North Clark Street, Chicago, Ill. Application made for entry at the postoffice at Chicago, Ill., as second class matter. Single copies, 25 cents; subscription, $3 a year in the United States, $3.50 in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts in transit, by fire, or otherwise, although every precaution is taken with such material. All manuscripts should be typewritten and must be accompanied by stamped and self-addressed envelopes. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright, and publishers are cautioned against using the same, either wholly or in part.

Copyright, 1923, by the Rural Publishing Corporation.

VOLUME 1 | 25 Cents | NUMBER 1

Contents for March, 1923

TWENTY-TWO REMARKABLE SHORT STORIES

The Mystery of Black Jean.....JULIAN KILMAN 41
A story of blood-curdling realism, with a smashing surprise at the end.

The Grave.....ORVILLE R. EMERSON 47
A soul-gripping story of terror.

Hark! The Rattle!.....JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS 53
An uncommon tale that will cling to your memory for many a day.

The Ghost Guard.....BRYAN IRVINE 59
A "spooky" tale with a grim background.

The Ghoul and the Corpse.....G. A. WELLS 65
An amazing yarn of weird adventure in the frozen North.

Fear.....DAVID R. SOLOMON 73
Showing how fear can drive a strong man to the verge of insanity.

The Place of Madness.....MERLIN MOORE TAYLOR 89
What two hours in a prison "solitary" did to a man.

The Closing Hand.....FARNSWORTH WRIGHT 98
A brief story powerfully written.

The Unknown Beast.....HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS 100
An unusual tale of a terrifying monster.

The Basket.....HERBERT J. MANGHAM 106
A queer little story about San Francisco.

The Accusing Voice.....MEREDITH DAVIS 110
The singular experience of Allen Defoe.

The Sequel.....WALTER SCOTT STORY 119
A new conclusion to Edgar Allen Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."

Contents for March, 1923—Continued

The Weaving Shadows.....W. H. Holmes 122
Chet Burke's strange adventures in a haunted house.

Nimba, the Cave Girl.....R. T. M. Scott 131
An odd, fantastic little story of the Stone Age.

The Young Man Who Wanted to Die.....? ? ? 135
An anonymous author submits a startling answer to the question, "What comes after death?"

The Scarlet Night.....William Sanford 140
A tale with an eerie thrill.

The Extraordinary Experiment of Dr. Calgroni.....
.....Joseph Faus and James Bennett Wooding 143
An eccentric doctor creates a frightful living thing.

The Return of Paul Slavsky.....
.....Capt. George Warburton Lewis 150
A "creepy" tale that ends in a shuddering, breath-taking way.

The House of Death.....F. Georgia Stroup 156
The strange secret of a lonely woman.

The Gallows.....I. W. D. Peters 161
An out-of-the-ordinary story.

The Skull.....Harold Ward 164
A grim tale with a terrifying end.

The Ape-Man .....James B. M. Clark, Jr. 169
A Jungle tale that is somehow "different."

THREE UNUSUAL NOVELETTES

The Dead Man's Tale.....Willard E. Hawkins 7
An astounding yarn that will hold you spellbound and make you breathe fast with a new mental sensation.

Ooze .....Anthony M. Rud 19
A Remarkable short novel by a master of "gooseflesh" fiction.

The Chain.....Hamilton Craigie 77
Craigie is at his best here.

A STRANGE NOVEL IN TWO PARTS

The Thing of a Thousand Shapes.....Otis Adelbert Kline 32
Don't start this story late at night.

THE EYRIE - - - - - - - - THE EDITOR 180

Also a number of odd facts and queer fancies, crowded in for good measure

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES apply to YOUNG & WARD, Advertising Managers, 168 North Michigan Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois

"Goose-flesh" Stories

TALES of horror—or "goose-flesh" stories—are commonly shunned by magazine editors. Few, if any, will consider such a story, no matter how interesting it may be. They believe that the public doesn't want this sort of fiction. We, however, believe otherwise. We believe there are tens of thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—of intelligent readers who really enjoy "goose-flesh" stories. Hence—

Weird Tales.

The Unique MAGAZINE

WEIRD TALES offers such fiction as you can find in no other magazine — fantastic stories, extraordinary stories, grotesque stories, stories of strange and bizarre adventure—the sort of stories, in brief, that will startle and amaze you. Every story in this issue of WEIRD TALES is an odd and remarkable flight of man's imagination. Some are "creepy," some deal in masterly fashion with "forbidden" subjects, like insanity, some are concerned with the supernatural and others with material things of horror—all are out of the ordinary, surprisingly new and unusual. A sensational departure from the beaten track—that is the reason for

Weird Tales.

A radiant bride at twenty—at twenty-five—what?

Is the Husband or Wife to Blame?

Is the husband or wife to blame for the tragedy of too many children?

Margaret Sanger, the great birth control advocate, comes with a message vital to every married man and woman.

THOUSANDS upon thousands of women today marry with the bloom of youth upon their cheeks. A few years of married life rub the bloom off. Children come, too many. And instead of the energetic, healthy girl we have a tired and bedraggled young-old woman. Why do women allow marriage, the holy thing, to work this wicked transformation?

MARGARET SANGER, the acknowledged world leader of the Birth Control movement and President of the American Birth Control League, has the answer for this most momentous problem of womankind. Every married woman knows only too well the tragedies resulting from ignorance of birth control.

Why should a woman sacrifice her love-life—a possession she otherwise uses every resource to keep? Why does she give birth to a rapid succession of children, if she has neither the means to provide for them nor the physical strength properly to care for them?

In her daring and startling book Margaret Sanger gives to the women of the world the knowledge she dared to print—the knowledge for which she faced jail and fought through every court to establish as woman's inalienable right to know.

"In Woman and the New Race" she shows how woman can and will rise above the forces that, in too many cases, have ruined her beauty through the ages—that still drag her down today—that wreck her mental and physical strength—that disqualify her for society, for self-improvement—that finally shut her out from the thing she cherishes most: her husband's love.

In blazing this revolutionary trail to the new freedom of women, this daring and heroic author points out that women who cannot afford to have more than one or two children, should not do so. It is a crime to herself, a crime to her children, a crime to society. And now for the first time Mrs. Sanger shows the way out. And she brings to the women of the world the greatest message it has been their good fortune to receive.

"Woman and the New Race" is a book that will be read wherever womankind struggles with the ever-present danger of too many children. It is a startling, mighty revelation of a new truth, a work that will open the eyes of tired, worn womankind. It can with truth and honesty be called woman's salvation.

Every woman in the country should have a copy of this remarkable and courageous work. For this reason we have arranged a special edition of "Woman and the New Race" at only $2.00 a copy.

PARTIAL LIST OF CONTENTS

*Woman's Error and Her Debt.
Two Classes of Women.
Cries of Despair.
*When Should a Woman Avoid Having Children?
Birth Control—A Parent's Problem or Woman's.
*Continence—Is It Practicable or Desirable?
*Are Preventive Means Certain?
*Contraceptives or Abortion?
Women and the New Morality.
Legislating Woman's Morals.
Why Not Birth Control Clinics in America?
Progress We have Made.
*Any one of these chapters alone is worth many times the price of the book.

Send No Money

The book is bound in handsome durable gray cloth, has artistic black lettering and is printed from large type on good paper. It contains 234 pages of priceless information. To have it come to you, merely fill in and mail the coupon below. It is sent to you in a plain wrapper. When "Woman and the New Race" is delivered to you by the postman, pay him $2.00 plus postage—but send no money with the coupon. There will be an unprecedented demand for this edition, which will soon be exhausted, so you are urged to mail the coupon now—at once.

Truth Publishing Company

Dept. T-503, 1400 Broadway - - New York

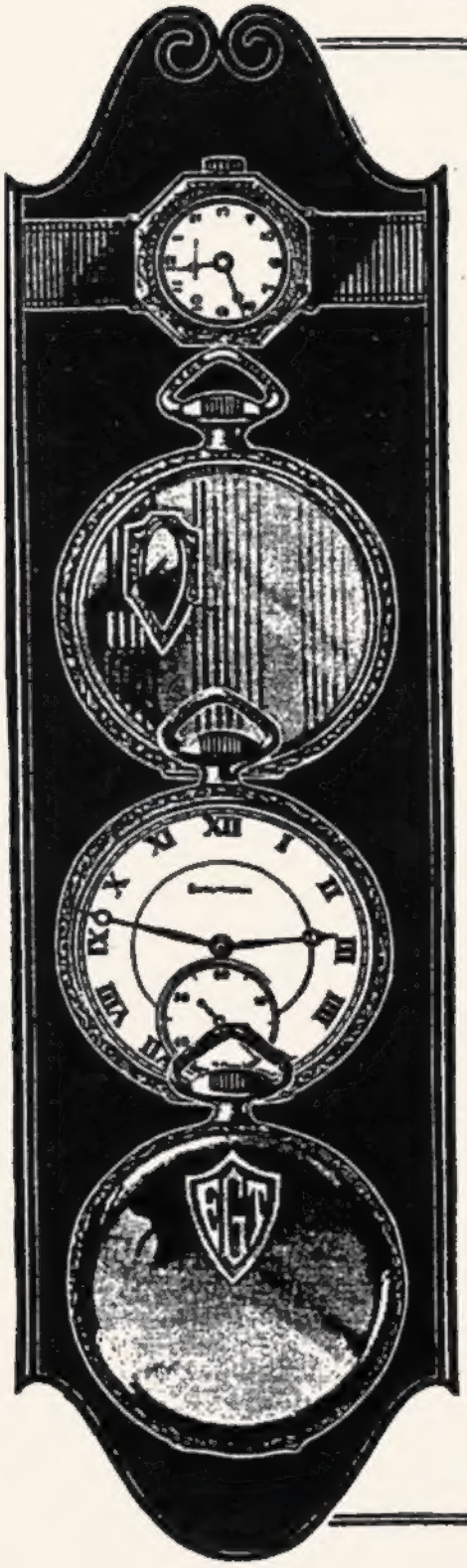
TRUTH PUBLISHING CO.,
Dept. T-503, 1400 Broadway, New York City.

Gentlemen: Please send me, in plain wrapper, Margaret Sanger's book, "Woman and the New Race." I am enclosing no money, but will give the postman who delivers the book to me, $2.00 plus postage.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....



21 Jewel Burlington

Adjusted to the Second
Adjusted to Temperature
Adjusted to Isochronism
Adjusted to Positions
21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels
25 Year Gold Strata Case
Your choice of Dials
(Including Montgomery R. R. Dial)
New Ideas in Thin Cases

Only $1.00 Down

Only One Dollar Down, will buy this masterpiece of watch manufacture. The balance you are allowed to pay in small, easy monthly payments. A 21-Jewel Watch—is sold to you at a price much lower than that of other high-grade watches. Besides, you have the selection of the finest thin model designs and latest styles in watch cases. Write for FREE Watch Book and our SPECIAL OFFER today.

The Burlington "Petite"

This exquisite little 17-jewel ladies' wrist watch. A perfect timepiece. Beautiful, 14K Solid Green Gold case. Illustration is exact size of Burlington "Petite".

Send for this wonderful little bracelet watch. See how beautiful the dainty green gold case looks on your own wrist.

Write

While this Special Offer Lasts

Get the Burlington Watch Book—write today. Find out about this great special offer which is being made for only a limited time. You will know a great deal more about watch buying when you read this book. You will be able to "steer clear" of the over-priced watches which are no better. Write for Watch Book and our special offer TODAY!

Burlington Watch Company
Dept. 1398, 19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Chicago
Canadian Address 62 Albert St., Winnipeg, Manitoba

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your $1.00 down offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name _____

Address _____

WEIRD TALES

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

Edited by Edwin Baird

VOLUME ONE NUMBER ONE | 25c A COPY | MARCH, 1923 | SUBSCRIPTION $3.00 A YEAR $3.50 IN CANADA

For Scalp-prickling Thrills and Stark Terror, Read

The DEAD MAN'S TALE

By Willard E. Hawkins

THE curious narrative that follows was found among the papers of the late Dr. John Pedric, phychical investigator and author of occult works. It bears evidences of having been received through automatic writing, as were several of his publications. Unfortunately, there are no records to confirm this assumption, and none of the mediums or assistants employed by him in his research work admits knowledge of it. Possibly—for the Doctor was reputed to possess some psychic powers—it may have been received by him. At any rate, the lack of data renders the recital useless as a document for the Society for Psychical Research. It is published for whatever intrinsic interest or significance it may possess. With reference to the names mentioned, it may be added that they are not confirmed by the records of the War Department. It could be maintained, however, that purposely fictitious names were substituted, either by the Doctor or the communicating entity.

THEY called me—when I walked the earth in a body of dense matter—Richard Devaney. Though my story has little to do with the war, I was killed in the second battle of the Marne, on July 24, 1918.

Many times, as men were wont to do who felt the daily, hourly imminence of death in the trenches, I had pictured that event in my mind and wondered what it would be like. Mainly I had inclined toward a belief in total extinction. That, when the vigorous, full-blooded body I possessed should lie bereft of its faculties, I, as a creature apart from it, should go on, was beyond cre-

dence. The play of life through the human machine, I reasoned, was like the flow of gasoline into the motor of an automobile. Shut off that flow, and the motor became inert, dead, while the fluid which had given it power was in itself nothing.

And so, I confess, it was a surprise to discover that I was dead and yet not dead.

I did not make the discovery at once. There had been a blinding concussion, a moment of darkness, a sensation of falling—falling—into a deep abyss. An indefinite time afterward, I found myself standing dazedly on the hillside, toward the crest of which we had been pressing against the enemy. The thought came that I must have momentarily lost consciousness. Yet now I felt strangely free from physical discomfort.

What had I been doing when that moment of blackness blotted everything out? I had been dominated by a purpose, a flaming desire——

Like a flash, recollection burst upon me, and, with it, a blaze of hatred—not toward the Boche gunners, ensconced in the woods above us, but toward the private enemy I had been about to kill.

It had been the opportunity for which I had waited interminable days and nights. In the open formation, he kept a few paces ahead of me. As we alternately ran forward, then dropped on our bellies and fired, I had watched my chance. No one would suspect, with the dozens who were falling every moment under the merciless fire from the trees beyond, that the bullet which ended Louis Winston's career came from a comrade's rifle.

Twice I had taken aim, but withheld my fire—not from indecision, but lest, in my vengeful heat, I might fail to reach a vital spot. When I raised my rifle the third time, he offered a fair target.

God! how I hated him. With fingers itching to speed the steel toward his heart, I forced myself to remain calm—to hold fire for that fragment of a second that would insure careful aim.

Then, as the pressure of my finger tightened against the trigger, came the blinding flash—the moment of blackness.

II.

I HAD evidently remained unconscious longer than I realized.

Save for a few figures that lay motionless or squirming in agony on the field, the regiment had passed on, to be lost in the trees at the crest of the hill. With a pang of disappointment, I realized that Louis would be among them.

Involuntarily I started onward, driven still by that impulse of burning hatred, when I heard my name called.

Turning in surprise, I saw a helmeted figure crouching beside something huddled in the tall grass. No second glance was needed to tell me that the huddled something was the body of a soldier. I had eyes only for the man who was bending over him. Fate had been kind to me. It was Louis.

Apparently, in his preoccupation, he had not noticed me. Coolly I raised my rifle and fired.

The result was startling. Louis neither dropped headlong nor looked up at the report. Vaguely I questioned whether there had been a report.

Thwarted, I felt the lust to kill mounting in me with redoubled fury. With rifle upraised, I ran toward him. A terrific swing, and I crashed the stock against his head.

It passed clear through! Louis remained unmoved.

Uncomprehending, snarling, I flung the useless weapon away and fell upon him with bare hands—with fingers that strained to rend and tear and strangle.

Instead of encountering solid flesh and bone, they too passed through him.

Was it a mirage? A dream? Had I gone crazy? Sobered—for a moment forgetful of my fury—I drew back and tried to reduce the thing to reason. Was Louis but a figment of the imagination—a phantom?

My glance fell upon the figure beside which he was sobbing incoherent words of entreaty.

I gave a start, then looked more closely.

The dead man—for there was no question about his condition, with a bloody shrapnel wound in the side of his head—*was myself!*

Gradually the import of this penetrated my conciousness. Then I realized that it was Louis who had called my name—that even now he was sobbing it over and over.

The irony of it struck me at the moment of realization. I was dead—*I* was the phantom—who had meant to kill Louis!

I looked at my hands, my uniform—I touched my body. Apparently I was as substantial as before the shrapnel buried itself in my head. Yet, when I had tried to grasp Louis, my hand seemed to encompass only space.

Louis lived, and I was dead!

The discovery for a time benumbed my feeling toward him. With impersonal curiosity, I saw him close the eyes of the dead man—the man who, somehow or other, had been me. I saw him search the pockets and draw forth a letter I had written only that morning, a letter addressed to——

With a sudden surge of dismay, I darted forward to snatch it from his hands. He should not read that letter!

Again I was reminded of my impalpability.

But Louis did not open the envelope, although it was unsealed. He read the superscription, kissed it, as sobs rent his frame, and thrust the letter inside his khaki jacket.

"Dick! Buddie!" he cried brokenly. "Best pal man ever had—how can I take this news back to her!"

My lips curled. To Louis, I was his pal, his buddie. Not a suspicion of the hate I bore him—had borne him ever since I discovered in him a rival for Velma Roth.

Oh, I had been clever! It was our "unselfish friendship" that endeared us both to her. A sign of jealousy, of ill nature, and I would have forfeited the paradise of her regard that apparently I shared with Louis.

I had never felt secure of my place in that paradise. True, I could always awaken a response in her, but I must put forth effort in order to do so. He held her interest, it seemed, without trying. They were happy with each other and in each other.

Our relations might be expressed by likening her to the water of a placid pool, Louis to the basin that held her, me to the wind that swept over it. By exerting myself, I could agitate the surface of her nature into ripples of pleasurable excitement—could even lash her emotions into a tempest. She responded to the stimulation of my mood, yet, in my absence, settled contentedly into the peaceful comfort of Louis' steadfast love.

I felt vaguely then—and am certain now, with a broader perspective toward realities—that Velma intuitively recognized Louis as her mate, yet feared to yield herself to him because of my sway over her emotional nature.

When the great war came, we all, I am convinced, felt that it would absolve Velma from the task of choosing between us.

Whether the agony that spoke from the violet depths of her eyes when we said good-by was chiefly for Louis or for me, I could not tell. I doubt if she could have done so. But in my mind was the determination that only one of us should return, and—Louis would not be that one.

Did I feel no repugnance at thought of murdering the man who stood in my way? Very little. I was a savage at heart—a savage in whom desire outweighed anything that might stand in the way of gaining its object. From my point of view, I would have been a fool to pass the opportunity.

Why I should have so hated him—a mere obstacle in my path—I do not know. It may have been due to a prescience of the intangible barrier his blood would always raise between Velma and me—or to a slumbering sense of remorse.

But, speculation aside, here I was, in a state of being that the world calls death, while Louis lived—was free to return home — to claim Velma — to flaunt his possession of all that I held precious.

It was maddening! Must I stand idly by, helpless to prevent this?

III.

I HAVE wondered, since, how I could remain so long in touch with the objective world—why I did not at once, or very soon, find myself shut off from earthly sights and sounds as those in physical form are shut off from the things beyond.

The matter seems to have been determined by my will. Like weights of lead, envy of Louis and passionate longing for Velma held my feet to the sphere of dense matter.

Vengeful, despairing, I watched beside Louis. When at last he turned away from my body and, with tears streaming from his eyes, began to drag a useless leg toward the trenches we had left, I realized why he had not gone on with the others to the crest of the hill. He, too, was a victim of Boche gunnery.

I walked beside the stretcher-bearers when they had picked him up and were conveying him toward the base hospital. Throughout the weeks that followed I hovered near his cot, watching the doctors as they bound up the lacerated tendons in his thigh, and missing no detail of his battle with the fever.

Over his shoulder I read the first letter he wrote home to Velma, in which he gave a belated account of my death, dwelling upon the glory of my sacrifice.

> *"I have often thought that you two were meant for each other"* [he wrote] *"and that if it had not been for fear of hurting me, you would have been his wife long ago. He was the best buddie a man ever had. If only I could have been the one to die!"*

Had I known it, I could have followed this letter across sea—could, in fact, have passed it and, by an exercise of the will, have been at Velma's side in the twinkling of an eye. But my ignorance of the laws of the new plane was total. All my thoughts were centered upon a problem of entirely different character.

Never was hold upon earthly treasure more reluctantly relinquished than was my hope of possessing Velma. Surely, death could not erect so absolute a barrier. There must be a way—some loophole of communication—some chance for a disembodied man to contend with his corporeal rival for a woman's love.

Slowly, very slowly, dawned the light of a plan. So feeble was the glimmer that it would scarcely have comforted one in less desperate straits, but to me it appeared to offer a possible hope. I set about methodically, with infinite patience, evolving it into something tangible, even though I had but the most indefinite idea of what the outcome might be.

The first suggestion came when Louis had so far recovered that but little trace of the fever remained. One afternoon, as he lay sleeping, the mail-distributor handed a letter to the nurse who happened to be standing beside his cot. She glanced at it, then tucked it under his pillow.

The letter was from Velma, and I was hungry for the contents. I did not then know that I could have read it easily, sealed though it was. In a frenzy of impatience, I exclaimed:

"Wake up, confound it, and read your letter!"

With a start, he opened his eyes. He looked around with a bewildered expression.

"Under your pillow!" I fumed. "Look under your pillow!"

In a dazed manner, he put his hand under the pillow and drew forth the letter.

A few hours later, I heard him commenting on the experience to the nurse.

"Something seemed to wake me up," he said, "and I had a peculiar impulse to feel under the pillow. It was just as if I knew I would find the letter there."

The circumstance seemed as remarkable to me as it did to him. It might be coincidence, but I determined to make a further test.

A series of experiments convinced me that I could, to a very slight degree, impress my thoughts and will upon Louis, especially when he was tired or

on the borderland of sleep. Occasionally I was able to control the direction of his thoughts as he wrote home to Velma.

On one occasion, he was describing for her a funny little French woman who visited the hospital with a basket that always was filled with cigarettes and candy.

"Last time" [he wrote], *"she brought with her a boy whom she called...."*

He paused, with pencil upraised, trying to recall the name.

A moment later, he looked down at the page and stared with astonishment. The words, *"She called him Maurice,"* had been added below the unfinished line.

"I must be going daffy," he muttered. "I'd swear I didn't write that."

Behind him, I stood rubbing my hands in triumph. It was my first successful effort to guide the pencil while his thoughts strayed elsewhere.

Another time, he wrote to Velma:

"I've a strange feeling, lately, that dear old Dick is near. Sometimes, as I wake up, I seem to remember vaguely having seen him in my dreams. It's as if his features were just fading from view."

He paused here so long that I made another attempt to take advantage of his abstraction.

By an effort of the will that it is difficult to explain, I guided his hand into the formation of the words:

"With a jugful of kisses for Winkie, as ever her...."

Just then, Louis looked down.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, as if he had seen a ghost.

IV.

"WINKIE" was a pet name I had given Velma when we were children together.

Louis always maintained there was no sense in it, and refused to adopt it, though I frequently called her by the name in later years. And of his own volition, Louis would never have mentioned anything so convivial as a jugful of kisses.

So, through the weary months before he was invalided home, I worked. When he left France at the debarkation point, he still walked on crutches, but with the promise of regaining the unassisted use of his leg before very long. Throughout the voyage, I hovered near him, sharing his impatience, his longing for the one we both held dearest.

Over the exquisite pain of the reunion—at which I was present, yet *not* present — I shall pass briefly. More beautiful than ever, more appealing with her vivid, deep coloring, Velma in the flesh was a vision that stirred my longing into an intense flame.

Louis limped painfully down the gangplank. When they met, she rested her head silently on his shoulder for a moment, then — her eyes brimming with tears—assisted him, with the tender solicitude of a mother, to the machine she had in waiting.

Two months later they were married. I felt the pain of this less deeply than I would have done had it not been essential to my designs.

Whatever vague hope I may have had, however, of vicariously enjoying the delights of love were disappointed. I could not have explained why — I only knew that something barred me from intruding upon the sacred intimacies of their life, as if a defensive wall were interposed. It was baffling, but a very present fact, against which I found it useless to rebel. I have since learned—but no matter. * * *

This had no bearing on my purpose, which hinged upon the ability I was a c q u i r i n g of influencing Louis' thoughts and actions—of taking partial control of his faculties.

The occupation into which he drifted, restricted in choice as he was by the stiffened leg, helped me materially. Often, after an interminable shift at the bank, he would plod home at night with brain so weary and benumbed that it was a simple matter to impress my will upon him. Each successful attempt, too, made the next one easier.

The inevitable consequence was that in time Velma should notice his aberrations and betray concern.

"Why did you say to me, when you came in last night, 'There's a blue Billy-goat on the stairs—I wish they'd drive him out'?" she demanded one morning.

He looked down shamefacedly at the tablecloth.

"I don't know what made me say it. I seemed to *want* to say it, and that was the only way to get it off my mind. I thought you'd take it as a joke." He shifted his shoulders, as if trying to dislodge an unpleasant burden.

"And was that what made you wear a necktie to bed?" she asked, ironically.

He nodded an affirmative. "I knew it was idiotic—but the idea kept running in my mind. It seemed as if the only way I could go to sleep was to give in to it. I don't have these freaks unless I'm very tired."

She said nothing more at the time, but that evening she broached the subject of his looking for an opening in some less sedentary occupation—a subject to which she thereafter constantly recurred.

Then came a development that surprised and excited me with its possibilities.

Exhausted, drained to the last drop of his nerve-force, Louis was returning late one night from the bank, following the usual month-end overtime grind. As he walked from the carline, I hovered over him, subduing his personality, forcing it under control, with the effort of will I had gradually learned to direct upon him. The process can only be explained in a crude way: It was as if I contended with him, sometimes successfully, for possession of the steering-wheel of the human car that he drove.

Velma was waiting when we arrived. As Louis' feet sounded on the threshold of their apartment, she opened the door, caught his hands, and drew him inside.

At the action, I felt inexplicably thrilled. It was as if some marvelous change had come over me. And then, as I met her gaze, I knew what that change was.

I held her hands in real flesh-and-blood contact. I was looking at her with Louis' sight!

V.

THE shock of it cost me what I had gained. Shaken from my poise, I felt the personality I had subdued regain its sway.

The next moment, Louis was staring at Velma in bewilderment. Her eyes were filled with alarm.

"You—you *frightened* me!" she gasped, withdrawing her hands, which I had all but crushed. "Louis, dear—don't *ever* look at me again like that!"

I can imagine the devouring intensity of gaze that had blazed forth from the features in that brief moment when they were mine.

From this time, my plans quickly took form. Two modes of action presented themselves. The first and more alluring, however, I was forced to abandon. It was none other than the wild dream of acquiring exclusive possession of Louis' body—of forcing him down, out, and into the secondary place I had occupied.

Despite the progress I had made, this proved inexpressibly difficult. For one thing, there seemed an affinity between Louis' body and his personality, which forced me out when he was moderately rested. This bond I might have weakened, but there were other factors.

One was the growing conviction on his part that something was radically wrong. With a faculty I had discovered of putting myself *en rapport* with him and reading his thoughts, I knew that at times he feared that he was going insane.

I once had the experience of accompanying him to an alienist and there, like the proverbial fly on the wall, overhearing learned scientific names applied to my efforts. The alienist spoke of "dual personality," "amnesia," and "the subconscious mind," while I laughed in my (shall I say?) ghostly sleeve.

But he advised Louis to seek a complete rest and, if possible, to go into the country to build up physically—

which was what I desired most to prevent.

I could not play the Mr. Hyde to his Dr. Jekyll if Louis maintained his normal virility.

Velma's fears, too, I knew were growing more acute. As insistently as she could, without betraying too openly her alarm, she pressed him to give up the bank position and seek work in the open air—work that would prove less devitalizing to a person of his peculiar temperament.

One of the results of debility from overwork is, apparently, that it deprives the victim of his initiative—makes him fearful of giving up his hold upon the meager means of sustenance that he has, lest he shall be unable to grasp another. Louis was in debt, earning scarcely enough for their living expenses, too proud to let Velma help as she longed to do, his game leg putting him at a disadvantage in the industrial field. In fact, he was in just the predicament I desired, but I knew that in time her wishes would prevail.

The circumstances, however, that deprived me of all hope of completely usurping his place was this: I could not, for any length of time, face the gaze of Velma's eyes. The personified truth, the purity that dwelt in them, seemed to dissolve my power, to beat me back into the secondary relationship I had come to occupy toward Louis.

He was sometimes tempted to tell her: "You give me my one grip on sanity."

I have witnessed his panic at the thought of losing her, at the thought that some day she might give him up in disgust at his aberrations, and abandon him to the formless "thing" that haunted him.

Curious—to be of the world and yet not of it—to enjoy a perspective that reveals the hidden side of effects, which seem so mysterious from the material side of the veil. But I would gladly have given all the advantages of my disembodied state for one hour of flesh-and-blood companionship with Velma.

My alternative plan was this

If I could not enter her world, what was to prevent me from *bringing Velma into mine?*

VI.

DARING? To be sure.

Unversed as I was in the laws that govern this mystery of passing from the physical into another state of existence, I could only hope that the plan would work. It might—and that was enough for me. I took a gambler's chance. By risking all, I might gain all—might gain—

The thought of what I might gain transported me to a heaven of pain and ecstasy.

Velma and I—in a world apart—a world of our own—free from the sordid trammels that mar the perfection of the rosiest earth-existence. Velma and I—together through all eternity!

This much reason I had for hoping! I observed that other persons passed through the change called death, and that some entered a state of being in which I was conscious of them and they of me. Uninteresting creatures they were, almost wholly preoccupied with their former earth-interests; but they were as much in the world as I had been in the world of Velma and Louis before that fragment of shrapnel ruled me out of the game.

A few, it was true, on passing from their physical habitations, seemed to emerge into a sphere to which I could not follow. This troubled me. Velma might do likewise. Yet I refused to admit the probability—refused to consider the possible failure of my plan. The very intensity of my longing would draw her to me.

The gulf that separated us was spanned by the grave. Once Velma had crossed to my side of the abyss, there would be no going back to Louis.

Yet I was cunning. She must not come to me with overpowering regrets that would cause her to hover about Louis as I now hovered about her. If I could inspire her with horror and loathing for him—ah! if I only could!

As a preliminary step, I must induce Louis to buy the instrument with which

my purpose was to be accomplished. This was not easy, for on nights when he left the bank during shopping hours he was sufficiently vigorous to resist my will. I could work only through suggestion.

In a pawnshop window that he passed daily I had noticed a revolver prominently displayed. My whole effort was concentrated upon bringing this to his attention.

The second night, he glanced at the revolver, but did not stop. Three nights later, drawn by a fascination for which he could not have accounted, he paused and looked at it for several minutes, fighting an urge that seemed to command: *"Step in and buy! Buy! Buy!"*

When, a few evenings later, he arrived home with the revolver and a box of cartridges that the pawnbroker had included in the sale, he put them hastily out of sight in a drawer of his desk.

He said nothing about his purchase, but the next day Velma came across the weapon and questioned him regarding it.

Visibly confused, he replied: "Oh, I thought we might need something of the sort. Saw it in a window, and the notion of having it sort of took hold of me. There's been a lot of housebreaking lately, and it's just as well to be prepared."

And now with impatience I waited for the opportunity to stage my *dénouement*.

It came, naturally, at the end of the month, when Louis, after a prolonged day's work, returned home, soon after midnight, his brain benumbed with poring over interminable columns of figures. When his feet ascended the stairs to his apartment it was not his faculties that directed them, but mine—cunning, alert, aflame with deadly purpose.

Never was more weird preliminary to a murder—the entering, in guise of a dear, familiar form, of a fiend incarnate, intent upon destroying the flower of the home.

I speak of a fiend incarnate, even though I was that fiend, for I did not enter Louis's body in full expression of my faculties. Taking up physical life, my recollection of existence as a spirit entity was always shadowy. I carried through the dominating impulses that had actuated me on entering the body, but scarcely more.

And the impulse I had carried through that night was the impulse to kill.

VII.

WITH utmost caution, I entered the bedroom.

My control of Louis's body was complete. I felt, for perhaps the first time, so corporeally secure that the vague dread of being driven out did not oppress me.

The room was dark, but the soft, regular breathing of Velma, asleep, reached my ears. It was like the invitation that rises in the scent of old wine which the lips are about to quaff—quickening my eagerness and setting my brain on fire.

I did not think of love. I lusted—but my lust was to destroy that beautiful body—to *kill!*

However, I was cunning—*cunning*. With caution, I felt my way toward the desk and secured the revolver, filling its chambers with leaden emissaries of death.

When all was in readiness, I switched on the light.

She wakened almost instantly. As the radiance flooded the room, a startled cry rose to her lips. It froze, unuttered, as—half rising—she met my gaze.

Her beauty—the raven blackness of her hair falling over her bare shoulders and full, heaving bosom, fanned the flame of my gory passion into fury. In an ecstasy of triumph, I stood drinking in the picture.

While I temporized with the lust to kill—prolonging the exquisite sensation—she was battling for self-control.

"Louis!" The name was gasped through bloodless lips.

Involuntarily, I shrank, reeling a little under her gaze. A dormant something seemed to rise in feeble protest at what I sought to do. The leveled revolver wavered in my hand.

But the note of panic in her voice revived my purpose. I laughed—mockingly.

"Louis!" her tone was sharp, but edged with terror. "Louis—*put down that pistol!* You don't know what you are doing."

She struggled to her feet and now stood before me. God! how beautiful—how tempting that bare white bosom!

"Put down that pistol!" she ordered hysterically.

She was frantic with fear. And her fear was like the blast of a forge upon the white heat of my passion.

I mocked her. A shrill, maniacal laugh burst from my throat. She had said I didn't know what I was doing! Oh, yes, I did.

"I'm going to kill you!—*kill you!*" I shrieked, and laughed again.

She swayed forward like a wraith, as I fired. Or perhaps that was the trick played by my eyes as darkness overwhelmed me.

VII.

A FEW fragmentary pictures stand out in my recollection like clear-etched cameos on the scroll of the past.

One is of Louis, standing dazedly—slightly swaying as with vertigo—looking down at the smoking revolver in his hand. On the floor before him a crumpled figure in ebony and white and vivid crimson.

Then a confusion of frightened men and women in oddly assorted nondescript attire — uniformed officers bursting into the room and taking the revolver from Louis's unresisting hand—clumsy efforts at lifting the white-robed body to the bed—a crimson stain spreading over the sheet—a doctor, attired in collarless shirt and wearing slippers, bending over her * * *

Finally, after a lapse of hours, a hushed atmosphere—efficient nurses—the beginning of delirium.

And one other picture—of Louis, cringing behind the bars of his cell, denied the privilege of visiting his wife's bedside—crushed, dreading the hourly announcement of her death—filled with unspeakable horror of himself.

Velma still lived. The bullet had pierced her left lung and life hung by a tenuous thread. Hovering near I watched with dispassionate interest the battle for life. For the time I seemed emotionally spent. I had made a supreme effort — events would now take their inevitable course and show whether I had accomplished my purpose. I felt neither anxious nor overjoyed, neither regretful nor trumphant—merely impersonally curious.

A fever set in lessening Velma's slender chances of recovery. In her delirium, her thoughts seemed always of Louis. Sometimes she breathed his name pleadingly, tenderly, then cried out in terror at some fleeting rehearsal of the scene in which he stood before her, the glitter of insanity in his eyes, the leveled revolver in his hand. Again she pleaded with him to give up his work at the bank; and at other times she seemed to think of him as over on the battlefields of Europe.

Only once did she apparently think of me—when she whispered the name by which I had called her, *"Winkie!"* and added, *"Dick!"* But, save for this exception, it was a l w a y s "Louis! Louis!"

Her constant reiteration of his name finally dispelled the apathy of my spirit.

Louis! All the vengeful fury toward him I had experienced when my soul went hurtling into the region of the disembodied returned with thwarted intensity.

When Velma's fever subsided, when the long fight for recovery began and she fluttered from the borderland back into the realm of the physical, when I knew I had failed—balked of my prey, I had at least this satisfaction:

Never again would these two—the man I hated and the woman for whom I hungered—never again would they be to each other as they had been in the past. The perfection of their love had been irretrievably marred. Never would she meet his gaze without an inward shrinking. Always on his part—

on both their parts—there would be an undercurrent of fear that the incident might recur—a grizzly menace, poisoning each moment of their lives together.

I had not schemed and contrived—and dared—in vain.

This was the thought I hugged when Louis was released from jail, upon her refusal to prosecute. It caused me sardonic amusement when, in their first embrace, the tears of despair rained down their cheeks. It recurred when they began their pitiful attempt to build anew on the shattered foundation of love.

And then—creepingly, slyly, like a bird of ill omen casting the shadow of its silent wings over the landscape—came retribution.

Many times, in retrospect, I lived over that brief hour of my return to physical expression—my hour of realization. Wraithlike, arose a vision of Velma—Velma as she had stood before me that night, staring at me with horror. I saw the horror deepen—deepen to abject despair.

How beautiful she had looked! But when I tried to picture that beauty, I could recall only her eyes. It mattered not whether I wished to see them—they filled my vision.

They seemed to haunt me. From being vaguely conscious of them, I became acutely so. Disconcertingly, they looked out at me from everywhere—eyes brimming with fear—eyes fixed and staring—filled with horrified accusation.

The beauty I had once coveted became a thing forbidden, even in memory. If I sought to peer through the veil as formerly—to witness her pathetic attempts to resume the old life with Louis—again those eyes!

It may perhaps sound strange for a disembodied creature—one whom you would call a ghost—to wail of being haunted. Yet haunting is of the spirit, and we of the spirit world are immeasurably more subject to its conditions than those whose consciousness is centered in the material sphere.

God! Those eyes. There is a refinement of physical torture which consists of allowing water to fall, drop by drop, for an eternity of hours, upon the forehead of the victim. Conceive of this torture increased a thousandfold, and a faint idea may be gained of the torture that was mine—from seeing everywhere, constantly, interminably, two orbs ever filled with the same expression of horror and reproach.

Much have I learned since entering the Land of the Shades. At that time I did not know, as I know now, that my punishment was no affliction from without, but the simple result of natural law. Cause set in motion must work out their full reaction. The pebble, cast into a quiet pool, makes ripples which in time return to the place of their origin. I had cast more than a pebble of disturbance into the harmony of human life, and through my intense preoccupation in a single aim had delayed longer than usual the reaction. I had created for myself a hell. Inevitably I was drawn into it.

Gone was every desire I had known to hover near the two who had so long engrossed my attention. Haunted, harried, scourged by those dreadful accusers, I sought to fly from them to the ends of the earth. There was no escape, yet, driven frantic, I still struggled to escape, because that is the blind impulse of suffering creatures.

The emotions that had so swayed me when I tried to blast the lives of two who held me dear now seemed puny and insignificant in comparison with my suffering. No physical torment can be likened to that which engulfed me until my very being was but a seething mass of agony. Through it, I hurled maledictions upon the world, upon myself, upon the creator. Horrible blasphemies I uttered.

And, at last—I prayed.

It was but a cry for mercy—the inarticulate appeal of a tortured soul for surcease of pain—but suddenly a great peace seemed to have come upon the universe.

Bereft of suffering, I felt like one who has ceased to exist.

Out of the silence came a wordless response. It beat upon my consciousness like the buffeting of the waves.

Words known to human ears would not convey the meaning of the message that was borne upon me—whether from outside source or welling up from within, I do not know. All I know is that it filled me with a strange hope.

A thousand years or a single instant—for time is a relative thing—the respite lasted. Then, I sank, as it seemed, to the old level of consciousness, and the torment was renewed.

Endure it now I knew that I must—and why. A strange new purpose filled my being. The light of understanding had dawned upon my soul.

And so I came to resume my vigil in the home of Velma and Louis.

VIII.

A BRAVE heart was Velma's—dauntless and true.

With the effects of the tragedy still apparent in her pallor and weakness, and in the shaken demeanor and furtive, self-distrustful attitude of Louis, she yet succeeded in finding a place for him as overseer of a small country estate.

I have said that I ceased to feel the torment of passion for Velma in the greater torment of her reproach. Ah! but I had never ceased to love her. As I now realized, I had desecrated that love, had transmuted it into a horrible travesty, had, in my abysmal ignorance, sought to obtain what I desired by destroying it; yet, beneath all, I had loved.

Well I know, now, that had I succeeded in my intention toward her, Velma would have ascended to a sphere utterly beyond my comprehension. Merciful fate had diverted my aim—had made possible some faint restitution.

I returned to Velma, loving her with a love that had come into its own, a love unselfish, untainted by thought of possession.

But, to help her, I must again hurt her cruelly.

Out of the chaos of her life she had slowly restored a semblance of harmony. Almost she succeeded in convincing Louis that their old peaceful companionship had returned; but to one who could read her thoughts, the nightmare thing that hovered between them weighed cruelly upon her soul.

She was never quite able to look into her husband's eyes without a lurking suspicion of what might lie in their depths; never able to compose herself for sleep without a tremor lest she should wake to find herself confronted by a fiend in his form. I had done my work only too well!

Now, slowly and inexorably, I began again undermining Louis' mental control. The old ground must be traversed anew, because he had gained in strength from the respite I had allowed him, and his outdoor life gave him a mental vigor with which I had not been obliged to contend before. On the other hand, I was equipped with new knowledge of the power I intended to wield.

I shall not relate again the successive stages by which I succeeded, first in influencing his will, then in partially subduing it, and, finally, in driving his personality into the background for indefinite periods. The terror that overwhelmed him when he realized that he was becoming a prey to his former aberrations may be imagined.

To shield Velma, I performed my experiments, when possible, while he was away from her. But she could not long be unaware of the moodiness, the haggard droop of his shoulders which accompanied his realization that the old malady had returned. The deepening terror in her expression was like a scourge upon my spirit—but I must wound her in order to cure.

More than once, I was forced to exert my power over Louis to prevent him from taking violent measures against himself. As I gained the ascendancy, a determination to end it all grew upon him. He feared that unless he took himself out of Velma's life, the insanity would return and force him again to commit a frenzied assault upon the one he held most dear. Nor could he avoid seeing the apprehension in her manner that told him

she knew — the shrinking that she bravely tried to conceal.

Though my power over him was greater than before, it was intermittent. I could not always exercise it. I could not, for example, prevent his borrowing a revolver one day from a neighboring farmer, on pretense of using it against a marauding dog that had lately visited the poultry yard.

Though I knew his true intention, the utmost that I could do—for his personality was strong at the time—was to influence him to postpone the deed he contemplated.

That night, I took possession of his body while he slept. Velma lay, breathing quietly, in the next room—for as this dreaded thing came upon him they had, through tacit understanding, come to occupy separate bedrooms.

Partially dressing, I stole downstairs and out to the tool-shed where Louis—fearing to trust it near him in the house—had hidden the revolver. As I returned, my whole being rebelled at the task before me—yet it was unavoidable, if I would restore to Velma what I had wrenched from her.

Quietly though I entered her room, a gasp—or rather a quick, hysterical intake of breath—warned me that she had wakened.

I flashed on the light.

She made no sound. Her face went white as marble. The expression in her eyes was that which had tortured me into the depths of a hell more frightful than any conceived by human imagination.

A moment I stood swaying before her, with leveled revolver—as I had stood on that other occasion, months before.

Slowly, I lowered the revolver, and smiled — not as Louis would have smiled but as a maniac, formed in his likeness, would have smiled.

Her lips framed the word "Louis," but, in the grip of despair, she made no sound. It was the despair not merely of a woman who felt herself doomed to death, but of a woman who consigned her loved one to a fate worse than death.

Still I smiled—with growing difficulty, for Louis' personality was restive and my time in the usurped body was short.

In that moment, I was not anxious to give up his body. At this new glimpse of her beauty through physical sight, my love for Velma flamed into hitherto unrealized intensity. For an instant my purpose in returning was forgotten. Forgotten was the knowledge of the ages which I had sipped since last I occupied the body in which I faced her. Forgotten was everything save—Velma.

As I took a step forward, my arms outstretched, my eyes expressing God knows what depth of yearning, she uttered a scream.

Blackness surged over me. I stumbled. I was being forced out—out—— That cry of terror had vibrated through the soul of Louis and he was struggling to answer it.

Instinctively, I battled against the darkness, clung to my hard-won ascendancy. A moment of conflict, and again I prevailed.

Once more I smiled. The effect of it must have been weird, for I was growing weaker and Louis had returned to the attack with overwhelming persistence. My tongue strove for expression:

"Sorry—Winkie—it won't happen again—I'm not—coming—back——"

WHEN I recovered from the momentary unconsciousness that accompanies transition from the physical to spiritual, Louis was looking in affright at the huddled figure of Velma, who had fainted away. The next instant, he had gathered her in his arms.

Though I had come near failing in the attempt to deliver my message, I had no fear that my visit would prove in vain. With clear prescience, I knew that my utterance of that old familiar nickname, *"Winkie,"* would carry untold meaning to Velma — that hereafter she would fear no more what she might see in the depths of her husband's eyes—that with a return of her old confidence in him, the specter of apprehension would be banished forever from their lives.

OOZE

A Novelette of a Thousand Thrills

By ANTHONY M. RUD

IN THE heart of a second-growth piney-woods jungle of southern Alabama, a region sparsely settled save by backwoods blacks and Cajans—that queer, half-wild people descended from Acadian exiles of the middle eighteenth century—stands a strange, enormous ruin.

Interminable trailers of Cherokee rose, white-laden during a single month of spring, have climbed the heights of its three remaining walls. Palmetto fans rise knee high above the base. A dozen scattered live oaks, now belying their nomenclature because of choking tufts of gray, Spanish moss and two-foot circlets of mistletoe parasite which have stripped bare of foliage the gnarled, knotted limbs, lean fantastic beards against the crumbling brick.

Immediately beyond, where the ground becomes soggier and lower—dropping away hopelessly into the tangle of dogwood, holly, poison sumac and pitcher plants that is Moccasin Swamp—undergrowth of ti-ti and annis has formed a protecting wall impenetrable to all save the furtive ones. Some few outcasts utilize the stinking depths of that sinister swamp, distilling "shinny" or "pure cawn" liquor for illicit trade.

Tradition states that this is the case, at least—a tradition which antedates that of the premature ruin by many decades. I believe it, for during evenings intervening between investigations of the awesome spot I often was approached as a possible customer by wood-billies who could not fathom how anyone dared venture near without plenteous fortification of liquid courage.

I knew "shinny," therefore I did not purchase it for personal consumption. A dozen times I bought a quart or two, merely to establish credit among the Cajans, pouring away the vile stuff immediately into the sodden ground. It seemed then that only through filtration and condensation of their dozens of weird tales regarding "Daid House" could I arrive at understanding of the mystery and weight of horror hanging about the place.

Certain it is that out of all the superstitious cautioning, head-wagging and whispered nonsensities I obtained only two indisputable facts. The first was that no money, and no supporting battery of ten-gauge shotguns loaded with chilled shot, could induce either Cajan or darky of the region to approach within five hundred yards of that flowering wall! The second fact I shall dwell upon later.

Perhaps it would be as well, as I am only a mouthpiece in this chronicle, to relate in brief why I came to Alabama on this mission.

I am a scribbler of general fact articles, no fiction writer as was Lee Cranmar—though doubtless the confession is superfluous. Lee was my roommate during college days. I knew his family well, admiring John Corliss Cranmer even more than I admired the son and friend—and almost as much as Peggy Breede whom Lee married. Peggy liked me, but that was all. I cherish sanctified memory of her for

just that much, as no other woman before or since has granted this gangling dyspeptic even a hint of joyous and sorrowful intimacy.

Work kept me to the city. Lee, on the other hand, coming of wealthy family—and, from the first, earning from his short-stories and novel royalties more than I wrested from editorial coffers—needed no anchorage. He and Peggy honeymooned a four-month trip to Alaska, visited Honolulu next winter, fished for salmon on Cain's River, New Brunswick, and generally enjoyed the outdoors at all seasons.

They kept an apartment in Wilmette, near Chicago, yet, during the few spring and fall seasons they were "home," both preferred to rent a suite at once of the country clubs to which Lee belonged. I suppose they spent thrice or five times the amount Lee actually earned, yet for my part I only honored that the two should find such great happiness in life and still accomplish artistic triumph.

They were honest, zestful young Americans, the type—and pretty nearly the *only* type—two million dollars cannot spoil. John Corliss Cranmer, father of Lee, though as different from his boy as a microscope is different from a painting by Remington, was even further from being dollar conscious. He lived in a world bounded only by the widening horizon of biological science—and his love for the two who would carry on that Cranmer name.

Many a time I used to wonder how it could be that as gentle, clean-souled and lovable a gentleman as John Corliss Cranmer could have ventured so far into scientific research without attaining small-caliber atheism. Few do. He believed both in God and human kind. To accuse him of murdering his boy and the girl wife who had come to be loved as the mother of baby Elsie—as well as blood and flesh of his own family—was a gruesome, terrible absurdity! Yes, even when John Corliss Cranmer was declared unmistakably insane!

Lacking a relative in the world, baby Elsie was given to me—and the middle-aged couple who had accompanied the three as servants about half of the known world. Elsie would be Peggy over again. I worshiped her, knowing that if my stewardship of her interests could make of her a woman of Peggy's loveliness and worth I should not have lived in vain. And at four Elsie stretched out her arms to me after a vain attempt to jerk out the bobbed tail of Lord Dick, my tolerant old Airedale —and called me "papa."

I felt a deep-down choking . . . . yes, those strangely long black lashes some day might droop in fun or coquetry, but now baby Elsie held a wistful, trusting seriousness in depths of ultramarine eyes —that same seriousness which only Lee had brought to Peggy.

Responsibility in one instant became double. That she might come to love me as more than foster parent was my dearest wish. Still, through selfishness I could not rob her of rightful heritage; she must know in after years. And the tale that I would tell her must not be the horrible suspicion which had been bandied about in common talk!

I went to Alabama, leaving Elsie in the competent hands of Mrs. Daniels and her husband, who had helped care for her since birth.

In my possession, prior to the trip, were the scant facts known to authorities at the time of John Corliss Cranmer's escape and disappearance. They were incredible enough.

For conducting biological research

ANTHONY M. RUD
Master of Goose Flesh Fiction
Contributes An Astounding Story to
WEIRD TALES
FOR APRIL
"The Square of Canvas"
A Tale of Shuddering Horror

upon forms of protozoan life. John Corliss Cranmer had hit upon this region of Alabama. Near a great swamp teeming with microscopic organisms, and situated in a semi-tropical belt where freezing weather rarely intruded to harden the bogs, the spot seemed ideal for his purpose.

Through Mobile he could secure supplies daily by truck. The isolation suited. With only an octoroon man to act as chef, houseman and valet for the times he entertained no visitors, he brought down scientific apparatus, occupying temporary quarters in the village of Burdett's Corners while his woods house was in process of construction.

By all accounts the Lodge, as he termed it, was a substantial affair of eight or nine rooms, built of logs and planed lumber bought at Oak Grove. Lee and Peggy were expected to spend a portion of each year with him; quail, wild turkey and deer abounded, which fact made such a vacation certain to please the pair. At other times all save four rooms was closed.

This was in 1907, the year of Lee's marriage. Six years later when I came down, no sign of a house remained except certain mangled and rotting timbers projecting from viscid soil—or what seemed like soil. And a twelve-foot wall of brick had been built to enclose the house completely! One portion of this had fallen *inward!*

II.

I WASTED weeks of time at first, interviewing officials of the police department at Mobile, the town marshals and county sheriffs of Washington and Mobile counties, and officials of the psychopathic hospital from which Cranmer made his escape.

In substance the story was one of baseless homicidal mania. Cranmer the elder had been away until late fall, attending two scientific conferences in the North, and then going abroad to compare certain of his findings with those of a Dr. Gemmler of Prague University. Unfortunately, Gemmler was assassinated by a religious fanatic shortly afterward. The fanatic voiced virulent objection to all Mendelian research as blasphemous. This was his only defense. He was hanged.

Search of Gemmler's notes and effects revealed nothing save an immense amount of laboratory data on *karyokinesis*—the process of chromosome arrangement occurring in first growing cells of higher animal embryos. Apparently Cranmer had hoped to develop some similarities, or point out differences between hereditary factors occurring in lower forms of life and those half-demonstrated in the cat and monkey. The authorities had found nothing that helped me. Cranmer had gone crazy; was that not sufficient explanation?

Perhaps it was for them, but not for me—and Elsie.

But to the slim basis of fact I was able to unearth:

No one wondered when a fortnight passed without appearance of any person from the Lodge. Why should anyone worry? A provision salesman in Mobile called up twice, but failed to complete a connection. He merely shrugged. The Cranmers had gone away somewhere on a trip. In a week, a month, a year they would be back. Meanwhile he lost commissions, but what of it? He had no responsibility for these queer nuts up there in the piney-woods. Crazy? Of course! Why should any guy with millions to spend shut himself up among the Cajans and draw microscope-enlarged notebook pictures of—what the salesman called—"germs?"

A stir was aroused at the end of the fortnight, but the commotion confined itself to building circles. Twenty carloads of building brick, fifty bricklayers, and a quarter-acre of fine-meshed wire—the sort used for screening off pens of rodents and small marsupials in a zoological garden—were ordered, *damn expense, hurry!* by an unshaved, tattered man who identified himself with difficulty as John Corliss Cranmer.

He looked strange, even then. A certified check for the total amount, given in advance, and another check of absurd size slung toward a labor *entre-*

preneur, silenced objection, however. These millionaires were apt to be flighty. When they wanted something they wanted it at tap of the bell. Well, why not drag down the big profits? A poorer man would have been jacked up in a day. Crannmer's fluid gold bathed him in immunity to criticism.

The encircling wall was built, and roofed with wire netting which drooped about the squat-pitch of the Lodge. Curious inquiries of workmen went unanswered until the final day.

Then Crannmer, a strange, intense apparition who showed himself more shabby than a quay derelict, assembled every man jack of the workmen. In one hand he grasped a wad of blue slips—fifty-six of them. In the other he held a Luger automatic.

"I offer each man a thousand dollars for *silence!*" he announced. "As an alternative—*death!* You know little. Will all of you consent to swear upon your honor that nothing which has occurred here will be mentioned elsewhere? By this I mean *absolute* silence! You will not come back here to investigate anything. You will not tell your wives. You will not open your mouths even upon the witness stand in case you are called! My price is one thousand apiece.

"In case one of you betrays me *I give you my word that this man shall die!* I am rich. I can hire men to do murder. Well, what do you say?"

The men glanced apprehensively about. The threatening Luger decided them. To a man they accepted the blue slips—and, save for one witness who lost all sense of fear and morality in drink, none of the fifty-six has broken his pledge, as far as I know. That one bricklayer died later in delirium tremens.

It might have been different had not John Corliss Cranmer escaped.

III.

THEY found him the first time, mouthing meaningless phrases concerning an amoeba—one of the tiny forms of protoplasmic life he was known to have studied. Also he leaped into a hysteria of self-accusation. He had murdered two innocent people! The tragedy was his crime. He had drowned them in ooze! Ah, God!

Unfortunately for all concerned, Cranmer, dazed and indubitably stark insane, chose to perform a strange travesty on fishing four miles to the west of his lodge—on the further border of Moccasin Swamp. His clothing had been torn to shreds, his hat was gone, and he was coated from head to foot with gluey mire. It was far from strange that the good folk of Shanksville, who never had glimpsed the eccentric millionaire, failed to associate him with Crannmer.

They took him in, searched his pockets—finding no sign save an inordinate sum of money—and then put him under medical care. Two precious weeks elapsed before Dr. Quirk reluctantly acknowledged that he could do nothing more for this patient, and notified the proper authorities.

Then much more time was wasted. Hot April and half of still hotter May passed by before the loose ends were connected. Then it did little good to know that this raving unfortunate was Crannmer, or that the two persons of whom he shouted in disconnected delirium actually had disappeared. Alienists absolved him of responsibility. He was confined in a cell reserved for the violent.

Meanwhile, strange things occurred back at the Lodge—which now, for good and sufficient reason, was becoming known to dwellers of the woods as Dead House. Until one of the walls fell in, however, there had been no chance to see—unless one possessed the temerity to climb either one of the tall live oaks, or mount the barrier itself. No doors or opening of any sort had been placed in that hastily-constructed wall!

By the time the western side of the wall fell, not a native for miles around but feared the spot far more than even the bottomless, snake-infested bogs which lay to west and north.

The single statement was all John Corliss Crannmer ever gave to the world. It proved sufficient. An immediate

search was instituted. It showed that less than three weeks before the day of initial reckoning, his son and Peggy had come to visit him for the second time that winter—leaving Elsie behind in company of the Daniels pair. They had rented a pair of Gordons for quail hunting, and had gone out. That was the last anyone had seen of them.

The backwoods negro who glimpsed them stalking a covey behind their two pointing dogs had known no more—even when sweated through twelve hours of third degree. Certain suspicious circumstances (having to do only with his regular pursuit of "shinny" transportation) had caused him to fall under suspicious at first. He was dropped.

Two days later the scientist himself was apprehended — a gibbering idiot who sloughed his pole—holding on to the baited hook—into a marsh where nothing save moccasins, an errant alligator, or amphibian life could have been snared.

His mind was three-quarters dead. Cranmer then was in the state of the dope fiend who rouses to a sitting position to ask seriously how many Bolsheviste were killed by Julius Caesar before he was stabbed by Brutus, or why it was that Roller canaries sang only on Wednesday evenings. He knew that tragedy of the most sinister sort had stalked through his life—but little more, at first.

Later the police obtained that one statement that he had murdered two human beings, but never could means or motive be established. Official guess as to the means was no more than wild conjecture; it mentioned enticing the victims to the noisome depths of Moccasin Swamp, there to let them flounder and sink.

The two were his son and daughter-in-law, Lee and Peggy!

II.

BY FEIGNING coma—then awakening with suddenness to assault three attendants with incredible ferocity and strength—John Corliss Cranmer escaped from Elizabeth Ritter Hospital.

How he hid, how he managed to traverse sixty-odd intervening miles and still balk detection, remains a minor mystery to be explained only by the assumption that maniacal cunning sufficed to outwit saner intellects.

Traverse these miles he did, though until I was fortunate enough to uncover evidence to this effect, it was supposed generally that he had made his escape as stowaway on one of the banana boats, or had buried himself in some portion of the nearer woods where he was unknown. The truth ought to be welcome to householders of Shanksville, Burdett's Corners and vicinage—those excusably prudent ones who to this day keep loaded shotguns handy and barricade their doors at nightfall.

The first ten days of my investigation may be touched upon in brief. I made headquarters in Burdett's Corners, and drove out each morning, carrying lunch and returning for my grits and pineywoods pork or mutton before nightfall. My first plan had been to camp out at the edge of the swamp, for opportunity to enjoy the outdoors comes rarely in my direction. Yet after one cursory examination of the premises I abandoned the idea. I did not *want* to camp alone there. And I am less superstitious than a real estate agent.

It was, perhaps, psychic warning; more probably the queer, faint, salty odor as of fish left to decay, which hung about the ruin, made too unpleasant an impression upon my olfactory sense. I experienced a distinct chill every time the lengthening shadows caught me near Dead House.

The smell impressed me. In newspaper reports of the case one ingenious explanation had been worked out. To the rear of the spot where Dead House had stood — inside the wall — was a swampy hollow circular in shape. Only a little real mud lay in the bottom of the bowllike depression now, but one reporter on the staff of *The Mobile Register* guessed that during the tenancy of the lodge it had been a fishpool. Drying up of the water had killed the fish, who now permeated the remnant of mud with this foul odor.

The possibility that Cranmer had needed to keep fresh fish at hand for some of his experiments silenced the natural objection that in a country where every stream holds gar pike, bass, catfish and many other edible varieties, no one would dream of stocking a stagnant puddle.

After tramping about the enclosure, testing the queerly brittle, desiccated top stratum of earth within and speculating concerning the possible purpose of the wall, I cut off a long limb of chinaberry and probed the mud. One fragment of fish spine would confirm the guess of that imaginative reporter.

I found nothing resembling a piscal skeleton, but established several facts. First, this mud crater had definite bottom only three or four feet below the surface of remaining ooze. Second, the fishy stench became stronger as I stirred. Third, at one time the mud, water, or whatever had comprised the balance of content, had reached the rim of the bowl. The last showed by certain marks plain enough when the crusty, two-inch stratum of upper coating was broken away. It was puzzling.

The nature of that thin, desiccated effluvium which seemed to cover everything even to the lower foot or two of brick, came in for next inspection. It was strange stuff, unlike any earth I ever had seen, though undoubtedly some form of scum drained in from the swamp at the time of river floods or cloudbursts (which in this section are common enough in spring and fall). It crumbled beneath the fingers. When I walked over it, the stuff crunched hollowly. In fainter degree it possessed the fishy odor also.

I took some samples where it lay thickest upon the ground, and also a few where there seemed to be no more than a depth of a sheet of paper. Later I would have a laboratory analysis made.

Apart from any possible bearing the stuff might have upon the disappearance of my three friends, I felt the tug of article interest — that wonder over anything strange or seemingly inexplicable which lends the hunt for fact a certain glamor and romance all its own. To myself I was going to have to explain sooner or later just why this layer covered the entire space within the walls and was not perceptible *anywhere* outside! The enigma could wait, however—or so I decided.

Far more interesting were the traces of violence apparent on wall and what once had been a house. The latter seemed to have been ripped from its foundations by a giant hand, crushed out of semblance to a dwelling, and then cast in fragments about the base of wall — mainly on the south side, where heaps of twisted, broken timbers lay in profusion. On the opposite side there had been such heaps once, but now only charred sticks, coated with that gray-black, omnipresent coat of desiccation, remained. These piles of charcoal had been sifted and examined most carefully by the authorities, as one theory had been advanced that Cranmer had burned the bodies of his victims. Yet no sign whatever of human remains was discovered.

The fire, however, pointed out one odd fact which controverted the reconstructions made by detectives months before. The latter, suggesting the dried scum, to have drained in from the swamp, believed that the house timbers had floated out to the sides of the wall —there to arrange themselves in a series of piles! The absurdity of such a theory showed even more plainly in the fact that *if* the scum had filtered through in such a flood, the timbers most certainly had been dragged into piles *previously!* Some had burned— *and the scum coated their charred surfaces!*

What had been the force which had torn the lodge to bits as if in spiteful fury? Why had the parts of the wreckage been burned, the rest to escape?

Right here I felt was the keynote to the mystery, yet I could imagine no explanation. That John Corliss Cranmer himself—physically sound, yet a man who for decades had led a sedentary life —could have accomplished such destruction, unaided, was difficult to believe.

V.

I TURNED, my attention to the wall, hoping for evidence which might suggest another theory.

That wall had been an example of the worst suide construction. Though little more than a year old, the parts left standing showed evidence that they had begun to decay the day the last brick was laid. The mortar had fallen from the interstices. Here and there a brick had cracked and dropped out. Fibrils of the climbing vines had penetrated crevices, working for early destruction.

And one side already had fallen.

It was here that the first glimmering suspicion of the terrible truth was forced upon me. The scattered bricks, even those which had rolled inward toward the gaping foundation lodge, *had not been coated with scum!* This was curious, yet it could be explained by surmise that the flood itself had undermined this weakest portion of the wall. I cleared away a mass of brick from the spot on which the structure had stood; to my surprise I found it exceptionally firm! Hard red clay lay beneath! The flood conception was faulty; only some great force, exerted from inside or outside, could have wreaked such destruction.

When careful measurement, analysis and deduction convinced me — mainly from the fact that the lowermost layers of brick all had fallen *outward*, while the upper portions toppled *in*—I began to link up this mysterious and horrific force with the one which had rent the Lodge asunder. It looked as though a typhoon or gigantic centrifuge had needed elbow room in ripping down the wooden structure.

But I got nowhere with the theory, though in ordinary affairs I am called a man of too great imaginative tendencies. No less than three editors have cautioned me on this point. Perhaps it was the narrowing influence of great personal sympathy—yes, and love. I make no excuses, though beyond a dim understanding that some terrific, implacable force must have made this spot his playground, I ended my ninth day of note-taking and investigation almost as much in the dark as I had been while a thousand miles away in Chicago.

Then I started among the darkies and Cajans. A whole day I listened to yarns of the days which preceded Cranmer's escape from Elizabeth Ritter Hospital —days in which furtive men sniffed poisoned air for miles around Dead House, finding the odor intolerable. Days in which it seemed none possessed nerve enough to approach close. Days when the most fanciful tales of mediaeval superstitions were spun. These tales I shall not give; the truth is incredible enough.

At noon upon the eleventh day I chanced upon Rori Pailleron, a Cajan —and one of the least prepossessing of all with whom I had come in contact. "Chanced" perhaps is a bad word. I had listed every dweller of the woods within a five mile radius. Rori was sixteenth on my list. I went to him only after interviewing all four of the Crabiers and two whole families of Pichons. And Rori regarded me with the utmost suspicion until I made him a present of the two quarts of "shinny" purchased of the Pichons.

Because long practice has perfected me in the technique of seeming to drink another man's awful liquor — no, I'm not an absolute prohibitionist; fine wine or twelve-year-in-cask Bourbon whisky arouses my definite interest — I fooled Pailleron from the start. I shall omit preliminaries, and leap to the first admission from him that he knew more concerning Dead House and its former inmates than any of the other darkies or Cajans roundabout.

" . . . But I ain't talkin'. *Sacre!* If I should open my gab, what might fly out? It is for keeping silent, y'r damn' right! . . ."

I agreed. He was a wise man—educated to some extent in the queer schools and churches maintained exclusively by Cajans in the depths of the woods, yet naive withal.

We drank. And I never had to ask another leading question. The liquor made him want to interest me; and the only extraordinary topic in this whole neck of the woods was the Dead House.

Three-quarters of a pint of acrid, nauseous fluid, and he hinted darkly. A pint, and he told me something I scarcely could believe. Another half-pint . . . But I shall give his confession in condensed form.

He had known Joe Sibley, the octoroon chef, houseman and valet who served Crammer. Through Joe, Rori had furnished certain indispensables in way of food to the Crammer household. At first, these salable articles had been exclusively vegetable—white and yellow turnip, sweet potatoes, corn and beans—but later, *meat!*

Yes, meat especially—whole lambs, slaughtered and quartered, the coarest variety of piney-woods pork and beef, all in immense quantity!

VI.

IN DECEMBER of the fatal winter Lee and his wife stopped down at the Lodge for ten days or thereabouts.

They were enroute to Cuba at the time, intending to be away five or six weeks. Their original plan had been only to wait over a day or so in the piney-woods, but something caused an amendment to the scheme.

The two dallied. Lee seemed to have become vastly absorbed in something—so much absorbed that it was only when Peggy insisted upon continuing their trip, that he could tear himself away.

It was during those ten days that he began buying meat. Meager bits of it at first—a rabbit, a pair of squirrels, or perhaps a few quail beyond the number he and Peggy shot. Rori furnished the game, thinking nothing of it except that Lee paid double prices—and insisted upon keepng the purchases secret from other members of the household.

"I'm putting it across on the Governor, Rori!" he said once with a wink. "Going to give him the shock of his life. So you mustn't let on, even to Joe about what I want you to do. Maybe it won't work out, but if it does . . . ! Dad'll have the scientific world at his feet! He doesn't blow his own horn anywhere near enough, you know."

Rori didn't know. Hadn't a suspicion what Lee was talking about. Still, if this rich, young idiot wanted to pay him a half dollar in good silver coin for a quail that anyone—himself included—could knock down with a five-cent shell, Rori was well satisfied to keep his mouth shut. Each evening he brought some of the small game. And each day Lee Crammer seemed to have use for an additional quail or so . . .

When he was ready to leave for Cuba, Lee came forward with the strangest of propositions. He fairly whispered his vehemence and desire for secrecy! He would tell Rori, and would pay the Cajan five hundred dollars—half in advance, and half at the end of five weeks when Lee himself would return from Cuba—provided Rori agreed to adhere absolutely to a certain secret program! The money was more than a fortune to Rori; it was undreamt-of affluence. The Cajan acceded.

"He wuz tellin' me then how the ol' man had raised some kind of pet," Rori confided, "an' wanted to get shet of it. So he give it to Lee, tellin' him to kill it, but Lee was set on foolin' him. W'at I ask yer is, w'at kind of a pet is it w'at lives down\in a mud sink *an' eats a couple hawgs every night!*"

I couldn't imagine, so I pressed him for further details. Here at last was something which sounded like a clue!

He really knew too little. The agreement with Lee provided that if Rori carried out the provisions exactly, he should be paid extra and at his exorbitant scale of all additional outlay, when Lee returned.

The young man gave him a daily schedule which Rori showed. Each evening he was to procure, slaughter and cut up a definite—and growing—amount of meat. Every item was checked, and I saw that they ran from five pounds up to *forty!*

"What in heaven's name, did you do with it?" I demanded, excited now and pouring him an additional drink for fear caution might return to him.

"Took it through the bushes in back an' slung it in the mud sink there! An' suthin' come up an' drug it down!"

"A 'gator?"

"*Diable!*. How should I know? It

was dark. I wouldn't go close." He shuddered, and the fingers which lifted his glass shook as with sudden chill. "Mebbe you'd of done it, huh? Not *me*, though! The young fellah tole me to sling it in, an' I slung it.

"A couple times I come around in the light, but there wasn't nuthin' there you could see. Jes' mud, an' some water. Mebbe the thing didn't come out in daytimes . . . ."

"Perhaps not," I agreed, straining every mental resource to imagine what Lee's sinister pet could have been. "But you said something about *two hogs a day!* What did you mean by that? This paper, proof enough that you're telling the truth so far, states that on the thirty-fifth day you were to throw forty pounds of meat—any kind—into the sink. Two hogs, even the piney-woods variety, weigh a lot more than forty pounds!"

"Them was after — after he come back!"

From this point onward, Rori's tale became more and more enmeshed in the vagaries induced by bad liquor. His tongue thickened. I shall give his story without attempt to reproduce further verbal barbarities, or the occasional prodding I had to give in order to keep him from maundering into foolish jargon.

Lee had paid munificently. His only objection to the manner in which Rori had carried out his orders was that the orders themselves had been deficient. The pet, he said had grown enormously. It was hungry, ravenous. Lee himself had supplemented the fare with huge pails of scraps from the kitchen.

From that day Lee purchased from Rori whole sheep and hogs! The Cajan continued to bring the carcasses at nightfall, but no longer did Lee permit him to approach the pool. The young man appeared chronically excited now. He had a tremendous secret—one the extent of which even his father did not guess, and one which would astonish the world! Only a week or two more and he would spring it. First he would have to arrange certain data.

Then came the day when everyone disappeared from Dead House. Rori came around several times, but concluded that all of the occupants had folded tents and departed — doubtless taking their mysterious "pet" along. Only when he saw from a distance Joe, the octoroon servant, returning along the road on foot toward the Lodge, did his slow mental processes begin to ferment. That afternoon Rori visited the strange place for the next to last time.

He did not go to the Lodge itself—and there were reasons. While still some hundreds of yards away from the place a terrible, sustained screaming reached his ears! It was faint, yet unmistakably the voice of Joe! Throwing a pair of number two shells into the breach of his shotgun, Rori hurried on, taking his usual path through the brush at the back.

He saw—and as he told me even "shinny" drunkenness fled his chattering tones—Joe, the octoroon. Aye, he stood in the yard, far from the pool into which Rori had thrown the carcasses—*and Joe could not move!*

Rori failed to explain in full, but *something*, a slimy, amorphous something, which glistened in the sunlight, already had engulfed the man to his shoulders! Breath was cut off. Joe's contorted face writhed with horror and beginning suffocation. One hand—all that was free of the rest of him!—beat feebly upon the rubbery, translucent thing that was engulfing his body!

Then Joe sank from sight . . .

VII.

FIVE days of liquored indulgence passed before Rori, alone in his shaky cabin, convinced himself that he had seen a phantasy born of alcohol. He came back the last time—to find a high wall of brick surrounding the Lodge, and including the pool of mud into which he had thrown the meat!

While he hesitated, circling the place without discovering an opening—which he would not have dared to use, even had he found it—a crashing, tearing of timbers, and persistent sound of awesome destruction came from within. He swung himself into one of the oaks near the wall. And he was just in time to

see the last supporting stanchions of the Lodge give way *outward!*

The whole structure came apart. The roof fell in—yet seemed to move after it had fallen! Logs of wall deserted retaining grasp of their spikes like layers of plywood in the grasp of the shearing machine!

That was all. Soddenly intoxicated now, Rori mumbled more phrases, giving me the idea that on another day when he became sober once more, he might add to his statements, but I—numbed to the soul—scarcely cared. If that which he related was true, what nightmare of madness must have been consummated here!

I could vision some things now which concerned Lee and Peggy, horrible things. Only remembrance of Elsie kept me faced forward in the search—for now it seemed almost that the handiwork of a madman must be preferred to what Rori claimed to have seen! What had been that sinister, translucent thing? That glistening thing which pumped upward about a man, smothering, engulfing?

Queerly enough, though such a theory as came most easily to mind now would have outraged reason in me if suggested concerning total strangers, I asked myself only what details of Rori's revelation had been exaggerated by fright and fumes of liquor. And as I sat on the creaking bench in his cabin, staring unseeing as he lurched down to the floor, fumbling with a lock box of green tin which lay under his cot, and muttering, the answer to all my questions lay within reach!

IT WAS not until next day, however, that I made the discovery. Heavy of heart I had reexamined the spot where the Lodge had stood, then made my way to the Cajan's cabin again, seeking sober confirmation of what he had told me during intoxication.

In imagining that such a spree for Rori would be ended by a single night, however, I was mistaken. He lay sprawled almost as I had left him. Only two factors were changed. No "shinny" was left—and lying open, with its miscellaneous contents strewed about, was the tin box. Rori somehow had managed to open it with the tiny key still clutched in his hand.

Concern for his safety alone was what made me notice the box. It was a receptacle for small fishing tackle of the sort carried here and there by any sportsman. Tangles of Dowagiac minnows, spoon hooks ranging in size to silver-backed number eights; three reels still carrying line of different weights, spinners, casting plugs, wobblers, floating baits, were spilled out upon the rough plank flooring where they might snag Rori badly if he rolled. I gathered them, intending to save him an accident.

With the miscellaneous assortment in my hands, however, I stopped dead. Something had caught my eye—something lying flush with the bottom of the lock box! I stared, and then swiftly tossed the hooks and other impedimenta upon the table. What I had glimpsed there in the box was a loose-leaf notebook of the sort used for recording laboratory data! And Rori scarcely could read, let alone *write!*

Feverishly, a riot of recognition, surmise, hope and fear bubbling in my brain, I grabbed the book and threw it open. At once I knew that this was the end. The pages were scribbled in pencil, but the handwriting was that precise chirography I knew as belonging to John Corliss Cranmer, the scientist!

> *" . . . Could he not have obeyed my instructions! Oh, God! This . . . "*

These were the words at top of the first page which met my eye.

Because knowledge of the circumstances, the relation of which I pried out of the reluctant Rori only some days later when I had him in Mobile as a police witness for the sake of my friend's vindication, is necessary to understanding, I shall interpolate.

Rori had not told me everything. On his late visit to the vicinage of Dead House he saw more. A crouching figure, seated Turk fashion on top of the wall, appeared to be writing industriously. Rori recognized the man as

Cranmer, yet did not hail him. He had no opportunity.

Just as the Cajan came near, Cranmer rose, thrust the notebook, which had rested across his knees, into the box. Then he turned, tossed outside the wall both the locked box and a ribbon to which was attached the key.

Then his arms raised toward heaven. For five seconds he seemed to invoke the mercy of Power beyond all of man's scientific prying. And finally he leaped, *inside* . . . !

Rori did not climb to investigate. He knew that directly below this portion of wall lay the mud sink into which he had thrown the chunks of meat!

VIII.

THIS is a true transcription of the statement I inscribed, telling the sequence of actual events at Dead House. The original of the statement now lies in the archives of the detective department.

Cranmer's notebook, though written in a precise hand, yet betrayed the man's insanity by incoherence and frequent repetitions. My statement has been accepted now, both by alienists and by detectives who had entertained different theories in respect to the case. It quashes the noisome hints and suspicions regarding three of the finest Americans who ever lived—and also one queer supposition dealing with supposed criminal tendencies in poor Joe, the octoroon.

John Corliss Cranmer *went* insane for sufficient cause!

AS READERS of popular fiction know well, Lee Cranmer's *forte* was the writing of what is called—among fellows in the craft—the pseudo-scientific story. In plain words, this means a yarn, based upon solid fact in the field of astronomy, chemistry, anthropology or whatnot, which carries to logical conclusion unproved theories of men who devote their lives to searching out further nadirs of fact.

In certain fashion these men are allies of science. Often they visualize something which has not been imagined even by the best of men from whom they secure data, thus opening new horizons of possibility. In a large way Jules Verne was one of these men in his day; Lee Cranmer bade fair to carry on the work in worthy fashion—work taken up for a period by an Englishman named Wells, but abandoned for stories of a different—and, in my humble opinion, less absorbing—type.

Lee wrote three novels, all published, which dealt with such subjects—two of the three secured from his own father's labors, and the other speculating upon the discovery and possible uses of interatomic energy. Upon John Corliss Cranmer's return from Prague that fatal winter, the father informed Lee that a greater subject than any with which the young man had dealt, now could be tapped.

Cranmer, senior, had devised a way in which the limiting factors in protozoic life and *growth*, could be nullified; in time, and with cooperation of biologists who specialized upon *karyokinesis* and embryology of higher forms, he hoped—to put the theory in pragmatic terms—to be able to grow swine the size of elephants, quail or woodcock with breasts from which a hundredweight of white meat could be cut away, and steers whose dehorned heads might butt at the third story of a skyscraper!

Such result would revolutionize the methods of food supply, of course. It also would hold out hope for all undersized specimens of humanity—provided only that if factors inhibiting growth could be deleted, some method of stopping gianthood also could be developed.

Cranmer the elder, through use of an undescribed (in the notebook) growth medium of which one constituent was *agar-agar*, and the use of radium emanations, had succeeded in bringing about apparently unrestricted growth in the paramœcium protozoan, certain of the vegetable growths (among which were bacteria), and in the amorphous cell of protoplasm known as the amœba—the last a single cell containing only neucleolus, neucleus, and a space known as the contractile vacuole which somehow aided in throwing off particles im-

possible to assimilate directly. This point may be remembered in respect to the piles of lumber left near the outside walls surrounding Dead House!

When Lee Cranmer and his wife came south to visit, John Corliss Cranmer showed his son an amœba—normally an organism visible under low-power microscope—which he had absolved from natural growth inhibitions. This amœba, a rubbery, amorphous mass of protoplasm, was of the size then of a large beef liver. It could have been held in two cupped hands, placed side by side.

"How large could it grow?" asked Lee, wide-eyed and interested.

"So far as I know," answered the father, "there is *no* limit—now! It might, if it got food enough, grow to be as big as the Masonic Temple!

"But take it out and kill it. Destroy the organism utterly—burning the fragments—else there is no telling what might happen. The amœba, as I have explained, reproduces by simple division. Any fragment remaining might be dangerous."

Lee took the rubbery, translucent giant cell—but he did not obey orders. Instead of destroying it as his father had directed, Lee thought out a plan. Suppose he should grow this organism to tremendous size? Suppose, when the tale of his father's accomplishment were spread, an amœba of many tons weight could be shown in evidence? Lee, of somewhat sensational cast of mind, determined instantly to keep secret the fact that he was not destroying the organism, but encouraging its further growth. Thought of possible peril never crossed his mind.

He arranged to have the thing fed—allowing for normal increase of size in an abnormal thing. It fooled him only in growing much more rapidly. When he came back from Cuba the amœba practically filled the whole of the mud sunk hollow. He had to give it much greater supplies. . . .

The giant cell came to absorb as much as two hogs in a single day. During daylight, while hunger still was appeased, it never emerged, however. That remained for the time that it could secure no more food near at hand to satisfy its ravenous and increasing appetite.

Only instinct for the sensational kept Lee from telling Peggy, his wife, all about the matter. Lee hoped to spring a *coup* which would immortalize his father, and surprise his wife terrifically. Therefore, he kept his own counsel—and made bargains with the Cajan, Rori, who supplied food daily for the shapeless monster of the pool.

The tragedy itself came suddenly and unexpectedly. Peggy, feeding the two Gordon setters that Lee and she used for quail hunting, was in the Lodge yard before sunset. She romped alone, as Lee himself was dressing.

Of a sudden her screams cut the still air! Without her knowledge, ten-foot *pseudopods*—those flowing tentacles of protoplasm sent forth by the sinister occupant of the pool—slid out and around her putteed ankles.

For a moment she did not understand. Then, at first suspicion of the horrid truth, her cries rent the air. Lee, at that time struggling to lace a pair of high shoes, straightened, paled, and grabbed a revolver as he dashed out.

In another room a scientist, absorbed in his notetaking, glanced up, frowned, and then—recognizing the voice—shed his white gown and came out. He was too late to do aught but gasp with horror.

In the yard Peggy was half engulfed in a squamous, rubbery something which at first glance he could not analyze.

Lee, his boy, was fighting with the sticky folds, and slowly, surely, losing his own grip upon the earth!

IX.

JOHN CORLISS CRANMER was by no means a coward. He stared, cried aloud, then ran indoors, seizing the first two weapons which came to hand—a shotgun and hunting knife which lay in sheath in a cartridged belt across hook of the hall-tree. The knife was ten inches in length and razor keen.

Cranmer rushed out again. He saw an indecent fluid something—which as yet he had not had time to classify—lumping itself into a six-foot-high center before his very eyes! It looked like one of the micro-organisms he had studied! One grown to frightful dimensions. An amœba!

There, some minutes suffocated in the rubbery folds—yet still apparent beneath the glistening ooze of this monster—were two bodies.

They were dead. He knew it. Nevertheless he attacked the flowing, senseless monster with his knife. Shot would do no good. And he found that even the deep, terrific slashes made by his knife closed together in a moment and healed. The monster was invulnerable to ordinary attack!

A pair of *pseudopods* sought out his ankles, attempting to bring him low. Both of these he severed—and escaped. Why did he try? He did not know. The two whom he had sought to rescue were dead, buried under folds of this horrid thing he knew to be his own discovery and fabrication.

Then it was that revulsion and insanity came upon him.

There ended the story of John Corliss Cranmer, save for one hastily scribbled paragraph—evidently written at the time Rori had seen him atop the wall.

May we not supply with assurance the intervening steps?

Cranmer was known to have purchased a whole pen of hogs a day or two following the tragedy. These animals never were seen again. During the time the wall was being constructed is it not reasonable to assume that he fed the giant organism within—to keep it quiet? His scientist brain must have visualized clearly the havoc and horror which could be wrought by the loathsome thing if it ever were driven by hunger to flow away from the Lodge and prey upon the countryside!

With the wall once in place, he evidently figured that starvation or some other means which he could supply would kill the thing. One of the means had been made by setting fire to several piles of the disgorged timbers; probably this had no effect whatever.

The amœba was to accomplish still more destruction. In the throes of hunger it threw its gigantic, formless strength against the house walls *from the inside;* then every edible morsel within was assimilated, the logs, rafters and other fragments being worked out through the contractile *vacuole.*

During some of its last struggles, undoubtedly, the side wall of brick was weakened—not to collapse, however, until the giant amœba no longer could take advantage of the breach.

In final death lassitude, the amœba stretched itself out in a thin layer over the ground. There it succumbed, though there is no means of estimating how long a time intervened.

The last paragraph in Cranmer's notebook, scrawled so badly that it is possible some words I have not deciphered correctly, read as follows:

> *"In my work I have found the means of creating a monster. The unnatural thing, in turn, has destroyed my work and those whom I held dear. It is in vain that I assure myself of innocence of spirit. Mine is the crime of presumption. Now, as expiation—worthless though that may be—I give myself . . . "*

It is better not to think of that last leap, and the struggle of an insane man in the grip of the dying monster.

Extraordinary, Unearthly Things
Will Thrill and Amaze You
In This Strange Story

The Thing *of a* Thousand Shapes

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

UNCLE JIM was dead.

I could scarcely believe it, but the little yellow missive, which had just been handed to me by the Western Union messenger boy, left no room for doubt. It was short and convincing:

"Come to Peoria at once. James Braddock dead of heart failure.
Corbin & Hix, Attorneys."

I should explain here that Uncle Jim, my mother's brother, was my only living near relative. Having lost both father and mother in the Iroquois Theatre Fire at the age of twelve years, I should have been forced to abandon my plans for a high school and commercial education but for his noble generosity. In his home town he was believed to be comfortably well off, but I had learned not long since that it had meant a considerable sacrifice for him to furnish the fifteen hundred dollars a year to put me through high school and business college, and I was glad when the time came for me to find employment, and thus become independent of his bounty.

My position as bookkeeper for a commission firm in South Water Street, while not particularly remunerative, at least provided a comfortable living, and

I was happy in it—until the message of his death came.

I took the telegram to my employer, obtained a week's leave-of-absence, and was soon on the way to the Union Depot.

All the way to Peoria I thought about Uncle Jim. He was not old—only forty-five—and when I had last seen him he had seemed particularly hale and hearty. This sudden loss of my nearest and dearest friend was, therefore, almost unbelievable. I carried a leaden weight in my heart, and it seemed that the lump in my throat would choke me.

Uncle Jim had lived on a three-hundred-and-twenty acre farm near Peoria. Being a bachelor, he had employed a housekeeper. The farm work was looked after by a family named Severs—man, wife and two sons—who lived in the tenant house, perhaps a thousand feet to the rear of the owner's residence, in convenient proximity to the barn, silos and other farm buildings.

As I have said, my uncle's neighbors believed him to be comfortably well off, but I knew the place was mortgaged to the limit, so that the income from the fertile acres was practically absorbed by overhead expenses and interest.

Had my uncle been a business man in the true sense of the term, no doubt he could have been wealthy. But he was a scientist and dreamer, inclined to let the farm run itself while he devoted his time to study and research. His hobby was psychic phenomena. His thirst for more facts regarding the human mind was insatiable. In the pursuit of his favorite study, he had attended seances in this country and abroad with the leading spiritualists of the world.

He was a member of the London Society for Psychical Research, as well as the American Society, and corresponded regularly with noted scientists, psychologists and spiritualists. As an authority on psychic phenomena, he had contributed articles to the leading scientific publications from time to time, and was the author of a dozen well-known books on the subject.

Thus, grief-filled though I was, my mind kept presenting to me memory after memory of Uncle Jim's scientific attainments and scholarly life, while the rumbling car wheels left the miles behind; and the thought that such a man had been lost to me and to the world was almost unbearable.

I arrived in Peoria shortly before midnight, and was glad to find Joe Severs, son of my uncle's tenant, waiting for me with a flivver. After a five-mile ride in inky darkness over a rough road, we came to the farm.

I was greeted at the door by the housekeeper, Mrs. Rhodes, and one of two men, nearby neighbors, who had kindly volunteered to "set up" with the corpse. The woman's eyes were red with weeping, and her tears flowed afresh as she led me to the room where my uncle's body lay in a gray casket.

A dim kerosene lamp burned in one corner of the room, and after the silent watcher had greeted me with a hand-clasp and a sad shake of the head, I walked up to view the remains of my dearest friend on earth.

As I looked down on that noble, kindly face, the old lump, which had for a time subsided, came back in my throat. I expected tears, heartrending sobs, but they did not come. I seemed dazed—bewildered.

Suddenly, and apparently against my own reason, I heard myself saying aloud, "He is not dead—only sleeping."

When the watchers looked at me in amazement I repeated, "Uncle Jim is *not dead!* He is only sleeping."

Mrs. Rhodes looked compassionately at me, and by a meaning glance at the others said as plainly as if she had spoken, "His mind is affected."

She and Mr. Newberry, the neighbor whom I had first met, gently led me from the room. I was, myself dumfounded at the words I had uttered, nor could I find a reason for them.

My uncle was undoubtedly dead, at least as far as this physical world was concerned. There was nothing about the appearance of the pale, rigid corpse to indicate life, and he had, without doubt, been pronounced dead by a physician. Why, then, had I made this unusual, uncalled for—in fact, ridiculous—statement? I did not know. I

concluded that I must have been crazed with grief—beside myself for the moment.

I had announced my intention to keep watch with Mr. Newberry and the other neighbor, Mr. Glitch, but was finally prevailed upon to go to my room, on the ground that my nerves were overwrought and I must have rest. It was decided, therefore, that the housekeeper, who had scarcely slept a wink the night before, and I should retire, while the two neighbors alternately kept two-hour watches, one sitting up while the other slept on a davenport near the fireplace.

Mrs. Rhodes conducted me to my room. I quickly undressed, blew out the kerosene light and got into bed. It was some time before I could compose myself for sleep, and I remember that just as I was dozing off I seemed to hear my name pronounced as if someone were calling me from a great distance:

"Billy!" and then, in the same far-away voice: *"Save me, Billy!"*

I had slept for perhaps fifteen minutes when I awoke with a start. Either I was dreaming, or something about the size and shape of a half-grown conger eel was creeping across my bed.

For the moment I was frozen with horror, as I perceived the white, nameless thing, in the dim light from my window. With a convulsive movement I threw the bedclothes from me, leaped to the floor, struck a match, and quickly lit the lamp. Then, taking my heavy walking-stick in hand, I advanced on the bed.

Moving the bedclothing cautiously with the stick and prodding here and there, I at length discovered that the thing was gone. The door was closed, there was no transom, and the window was screened. I therefore concluded that it must still be in the room.

With this thought in mind, I carefully searched every inch of space, looking under and behind the furniture, with the lamp in one hand and stick in the other. I then removed all the bedding and opened the dresser drawers, and found—nothing!

After completely satisfying myself that the animal I had seen, or perhaps seemed to see, could not possibly be in the room, I decided that I had been suffering from a nightmare, and again retired. Because of my nervousness from the experience, I did not again blow out the light, but instead turned it low.

After a half hour of restless turning and tossing, I succeeded in going to sleep; this time for possibly twenty minutes, when I was once more aroused. The same feeling of horror came over me, as I distinctly heard a rolling, scraping sound beneath my bed. I kept perfectly still and waited while the sound went on. Something was apparently creeping underneath my bed, and it seemed to be moving toward the foot, slowly and laboriously.

Stealthily I sat up, leaned forward and peered over the foot-board. The sounds grew more distinct, and a white, round mass, which looked like a porcupine rolled into a ball with bristles projecting, emerged from under my bed. I uttered a choking cry of fright, and the thing *disappeared before my eyes!*

Without waiting to search the room further, I leaped from the bed to the spot nearest the door, wrenched it open, and started on a run for the living-room, attired only in pajamas. As I neared the room, however, part of my lost courage came back to me, and I slowed down to a walk. I reasoned that a precipitate entrance into the room would arouse the household, and that possibly, after all, I was only the victim of a second nightmare. I resolved, therefore, to say nothing to the watchers about my experience, but to tell them only that I was unable to sleep and had come down for company.

Newberry met me at the door.

"Why what's the matter?" he asked. "You look pale. Anything wrong?"

"Nothing but a slight attack of indigestion. Couldn't sleep, so I came down for company."

"You should have brought a dressing-gown or something. You may take cold."

"Oh, I feel quite comfortable enough," I said.

Newberry stirred the logs in the fireplace to a blaze, and we moved our chairs close to the flickering circle of warmth. The dim light was still burning in the corner of the room, and Glitch was snoring on the davenport.

"Funny thing," said Newberry, "the instructions your uncle left."

"Instructions? What instructions?" I asked.

"Why, didn't you know? But of course you didn't. He left written instructions with Mrs. Rhodes that in case of his sudden death his body was not to be embalmed, packed in ice, or preserved in any way, and that it was not to be buried under any consideration, until decomposition had set in. He also ordered that no autopsy should be held until it had been definitely decided that putrefaction had taken place."

"Have these instructions been carried out?" I asked.

"To the letter," he replied.

"And how long will it take for putrefaction to set in?"

"The doctors say it will probably be noticed in twenty-four hours."

I reflected on this strange order of my uncle's. It seemed to me that he must have feared being buried alive, or something of the sort, and I recalled several instances, of which I had heard, where bodies, upon being exhumed, were found turned over in their coffins, while others had apparently torn their hair and clawed the lid in their efforts to escape from a living tomb.

I was beginning to feel sleepy again and had just started to doze, when Newberry grasped my arm.

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing toward the body.

I looked quickly and seemed to see something white for an instant, near the nostrils.

"Did you see it?" he asked breathlessly.

"See what?" I replied, wishing to learn if he had seen the same thing I had.

"I saw something white, like a thick vapor or filmy veil, come out of his nose. When I spoke to you it seemed to jerk back. Didn't you see it?"

"Thought I saw a white flash there when you spoke, but it must have been imagination."

The time had now arrived for Glitch to watch, so my companion wakened him, and they exchanged places. Newberry was soon asleep, and Glitch, being a stoical German, said little. I presently became drowsy, and was asleep in my chair in a short time.

A cry from Glitch brought me to my feet. "Vake up and help catch der cat!"

"What cat?" demanded Newberry, also awakening.

"Der big vite cat," said Glitch, visibly excited. "Chust now he came der door through and yumped der coffin in."

The three of us rushed to the coffin, but there was no sign of a cat, and everything seemed undisturbed.

"Dot's funny," said Glitch. "Maybe it's hiding someveres in der room."

We searched the room, without result.

"You've been seeing things," said Newberry.

"What did the animal look like?" I asked.

"Vite, und big as a dog. It kommt der door in, so, und galloped across der floor, so, und yumped in der casket chust like dot. *Ach!* It vos a fierce-looking beast."

Glitch was very much in earnest and gesticulated rapidly as he described the appearance and movements of the feline. Perhaps I should have felt inclined to laugh, had it not been for my own experience that night. I noticed, too, that Newberry's expression was anything but jocular.

It was now nearly four-o'clock, time for Newberry to watch, but Glitch protested that he could not sleep another wink, so the three of us drew chairs up close to the fire. On each side of the fireplace was a large window. The shades were completely drawn and the windows were draped with heavy lace curtains. Happening to look up at the window to the left, I noticed something of a mouse-gray color hanging near the top of one of the curtains. As I looked, I fancied I saw a slight movement, as of a wing being stretched a bit and

then folded, and the thing took on the appearance of a large vampire bat, hanging upside down.

I called the attention of my companions to our singular visitor, and both saw it as plainly as I.

"How do you suppose he got in?" asked Newberry.

"Funny ve didn't see him before," said Glitch.

I picked up the fire tongs and Newberry seized the poker. Creeping softly up to the curtain, I stood on tiptoe and reached up to seize the animal with the tongs. It was too quick for me, however, and fluttered out of my reach. There followed a chase around the room, which lasted several minutes. Seeing that it would be impossible for us to capture the creature by this method, we gave up the chase, whereupon it calmed down and suspended itself from the picture molding, upside down.

On seeing this, Glitch, who had taken a heavy book from the table, hurled it at our unwelcome visitor. His aim was good, and the thing uttered a *squeak* as it was crushed against the wall.

At this moment I thought I heard a moan from the direction of the casket, but could not be certain.

Newberry and I rushed over to where the book had fallen, intent on dispatching the thing with poker and tongs, but only the book lay on the floor. The creature had *completely disappeared.*

I picked up the book, and noticed, as I did so, a grayish smear on the back cover. Taking this over to the light, we saw that it had a soapy appearance. As we looked, the substance apparently became absorbed, either by the atmosphere or into the cloth cover of the book. There remained, however, a dry, white, faintly-defined splotch on the book cover.

"What do you make of it?" I asked them.

"Strange!" said Newberry.

I turned to Glitch, and noticed for the first time that his eyes were wide with fear. He shook his head and cast furtive glances toward the casket.

"What do *you* think it is?" I asked.

"A vampire, maybe. A *real* vampire."

"What do you mean by a real vampire?"

Glitch then described how, in the folk lore of his native land, there were stories current of corpses which lived on in the grave. It was believed that the spirits of these corpses assumed the form of huge vampire bats at night, and went about sucking the blood of living persons, with which they would return to the grave from time to time and nourish the corpse. This proceeding was kept up indefinitely, unless the corpse were exhumed and a stake driven through the heart.

He related, in particular, the story of a Hungarian named Arnold Paul, whose body was dug up after it had been buried forty days. It was found that his cheeks were flushed with blood, and that his hair, beard and nails had grown in the grave. When the stake was driven through his heart, he had uttered a frightful shriek and a torrent of blood gushed from his mouth.

This vampire story seized on my imagination in a peculiar way. I thought again of my uncle's strange request regarding the disposition of his body, and of the strange apparitions I had seen. For the moment I was a convert to the vampire theory.

My better judgment, however, soon convinced me that there could not be such a thing as a vampire, and, even if there were, a man whose character had been so noble as that of my deceased uncle would most certainly never resort to such hideous and revolting practices.

We sat together in silence as the first faint streaks of dawn showed in the east. A few minutes later the welcome aroma of coffee and frying bacon greeted our nostrils, and Mrs. Rhodes came into announce that breakfast was ready.

After breakfast, my newly-made friends departed for their homes, both assuring me that they would be glad to come and watch with me again that night.

However, I read something in the uneasy manner of Glitch which led

me to believe that I could not count on him, and I was, therefore, not greatly surprised when he telephoned me an hour later, stating that his wife was ill, and that he would not be able to come.

II.

I STROLLED outdoors to enjoy a cigar, comforted by the rays of the morning sun after my night's experience.

It was pleasant, I reflected, to be once more in the realm of the natural, to see the trees attired in the autumn foliage, to feel the rustle of fallen leaves underfoot, to fill my lungs with the spicy, invigorating October air.

A gray squirrel scampered across my pathway, his cheek pouches bulging with acorns. A flock of blackbirds, migrating southward, stopped for a few moments in the trees above my head, chattering vociferously; then resumed their journey with a sudden *whirr* of wings and a few hoarse notes of farewell.

"It is but a step," I reflected, "from the natural to the supernatural."

This observation started a new line of thought. After all, could anything be supernatural—above nature? Nature, according to my belief, was only another name for God, eternal mind, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient ruler of the universe. If He were omnipotent, could anything take place contrary to His laws? Obviously not.

The word "supernatural" was, after all, only an expression invented by man in his finite ignorance, to define those things which he did not understand. Telegraphy, telephony, the phonograph, the moving picture—all would have been regarded with superstition by an age less advanced than ours. Man had only to become familiar with the laws governing them, in order to discard the word "supernatural" as applied to their manifestations.

What right, then, had I to term the phenomena, which I had just witnessed, supernatural? I might call them supernormal, but to think of them as supernatural would be to believe the impossible: namely, that that which is all-powerful had been overpowered.

I resolved, then and there, that if further phenomena manifested themselves that night, I would, as far as it were possible, curb my superstition and fear, regard them with the eye of a philosopher, and endeavor to learn their cause, which must necessarily be governed by natural law.

A gray cloud of dust and the whirring of a motor announced the coming of an automobile. The next minute an ancient flivver, with whose bumps of eccentricity I had gained some acquaintance, turned into the driveway and stopped opposite me. Joe Severs, older son of my uncle's tenant, stepped out and came running toward me.

"Glitch's wife died this morning," he panted, "and he swears Mr. Braddock is a vampire and sucked her blood."

"What rot!" I replied. "Nobody believes him, of course?"

"I ain't so sure of that," said Joe. "Some of the farmers are takin' it mighty serious. One of the Langdon boys, first farm north of here, was took sick this mornin'. Doctor don't know what's the matter of him. Folks say it looks mighty queer."

Mrs. Rhodes appeared on the front porch.

"A telephone call for you, sir," she said.

I hastened to the 'phone. A woman was speaking.

"This is Mrs. Newberry," she said "My husband is dreadfully ill, and asked me to tell you that he cannot come to sit up with you tonight."

I thanked the lady, offered my condolences, and tendered my sincere wishes for her husband's speedy recovery. This done, I wrote a note of sympathy to Mr. Glitch, and dispatched Joe with it.

Here, indeed, was a pretty situation. Glitch's wife dead, Newberry seriously ill, and the whole country-side frightened by this impossible vampire story. I knew it would be useless to ask any of the other neighbors to keep watch with me. Obviously, I was destined to face the terrors of the coming night

alone. Was I equal to the task? Could my nerves, already unstrung by the previous night's experience, withstand the ordeal?

I must confess, and not without a feeling of shame, that at this juncture I felt impelled to flee, anywhere, and leave my deceased uncle's affairs to shape themselves as they would.

With this idea in mind, I repaired to my room and started to pack my grip. Something fell to the floor. It was my uncle's last letter, received only the day before the telegram arrived announcing his death. I hesitated—then picked it up and opened it. The last paragraph held my attention:

> "And, Billy, my boy, don't worry any more about the money I advanced you. It was, as you say, a considerable drain on my resources, but I gave it willingly, gladly, for the education of my sister's son. My only regret is that I could not have done more.
>
> "Affectionately,
>
> "Uncle Jim."

A flush of guilt came over me. The reproach of my conscience was keen and painful. I had been about to commit a cowardly, dishonorable deed.

"Thank God, for the accidental intervention of that letter," I said fervently.

My resolution was firmly made now. I would see the thing through at all costs. The noble love, the generous self-sacrifice of my uncle, should not go unrequited.

I quickly unpacked my bag and walked downstairs. The rest of the day was uneventful, but the night—how I dreaded the coming of the night! As I stood on the porch and watched the last faint glow of sunset slowly fading, I wished that I, like Joshua, might cause the sun and moon to stand still.

Twilight came on all too quickly, accelerated by a bank of heavy clouds which appeared on the western horizon; and darkness succeeded twilight with unwonted rapidity.

I entered the house and trod the hallway leading to the living-room, with much the same feeling, no doubt, that a convict experiences when entering the death cell.

The housekeeper was just placing the lamp, freshly cleaned and filled, in the room. Joe Severs' younger brother, Sam, had placed logs in the fireplace, with kindling and paper beneath them, ready for lighting. Mrs. Rhodes bade me a kindly "Good-night, sir," and departed noiselessly.

At last the dreaded moment had arrived. I was alone with the nameless powers of darkness.

I shuddered involuntarily. A damp chill pervaded the air, and I ignited the kindling beneath the logs in the fireplace. Then, drawing the shades to shut out the pitchy blackness of the night, I lighted my pipe and stood in the warm glow.

Under the genial influence of pipe and warmth, my feeling of fear was temporarily dissipated. Taking a book from the library table, I settled down to read. It was called "The Reality of Materialization Phenomena," and had been written by my uncle. The publishers were Bulwer & Sons, New York and London.

It was apparently a record of the observations made by my uncle at materialization seances in this country and Europe. Contrary to my usual custom on starting a book, I read the author's introduction. He began by expressing the wish that those who might read the work should first lay aside all prejudice and all preconceived ideas regarding the subject, which were not based on positive knowledge; then weigh the facts as he had found them before drawing a definite conclusion.

The following passage, in particular, held my attention:

> "While it is to be admitted, with regret, that there are many people calling themselves mediums, who deceive their sitters nightly and whose productions are consequently mere optical illusions, produced my chicanery and legerdemain, the writer has nevertheless gathered, at the sittings recorded in this book, where all possibility of fraud was excluded by rigorous

examination and control, undeniable evidence that genuine materializations are, and can be, produced.

"The source and physical composition—if indeed it be physical—of a phantasm materialized by a true medium, remains, up to the present time, inexplicable. That such manifestations are not hallucinations, has been proved time and again by taking photographs. One would indeed be compelled to strain his credulity to the utmost, were he to believe that a mere hallucination could be photographed.

"As I have stated, the exact nature and source of the phenomena are apparently inscrutable; however, it is a notable fact that the strongest manifestations take place when the medium is in a state of catalepsy, or suspended animation. Her hands are cold—her body becomes rigid—her eyes, if open, appear to be fixed on space—"

A roll of thunder, quickly followed by a rush of wind, rudely interrupted my reading. The housekeeper appeared in the doorway, lamp in hand.

"Would you mind helping me close the windows, sir?" she asked. "There is a big rainstorm coming, and they must be closed quickly, or the furnishings and wall paper will be soaked."

Together we ascended the stairs. I rushed from window to window, while she lighted the way with the dim lamp. This duty attended to, she again bade me "Good night," and I returned to the living-room.

As I entered, I glanced at the casket: then looked again while a feeling of horror crept over me. Either I was dreaming, or it had been completely draped with a white sheet during my absence.

I rubbed my eyes, pinched myself, and advanced to confirm the evidence of my eyesight by the sense of touch. As I extended my hand, the center of the sheet rose in a sharp peak, as if lifted by some invisible presence, and the entire fabric traveled upward toward the ceiling. I drew back with a cry of dread, watching it with perhaps the same fascination that is experienced by a doomed bird or animal looking into the eyes of a serpent that is about to devour it.

The point touched the ceiling. There was a crash of thunder, accompanied by a blinding flash of lightning which illuminated the room through the sides of the ill-fitting window shades, and I found myself staring at the bare ceiling.

Walking dazedly to the fireplace, I poked the logs until they blazed, and then sat down to collect my thoughts. Torrents of rain were beating against the window panes. Thunder roared and lightning flashed incessantly.

I took up my pipe and was about to light it when a strange sight interrupted me. Something round and flat, about six inches in diameter, and of a grayish color, was moving along the floor from the casket toward the center of the room. I watched it, fascinated, while the blood seemed to congeal in my veins. It did not roll or slide along the floor, but seemed rather to *flow* forward.

It reminded me, more than anything else, of an amœba, one of those microscopic, unicellular animalcule which I had examined in the study of zoology: An amœba magnified, perhaps, several million diameters. I could plainly see, it put forth projections, resembling pseudopods, from time to time, and again withdraw them quickly into the body mass.

The lighted match burned my fingers, and I dropped it on the hearth. In the meantime the creature had reached the center of the room and stopped. A metamorphosis was now taking place before my eyes. To my surprise, I beheld, in place of a magnified amœba, a gigantic trilobite, larger, it is true, than any specimen which has ever been found, but, nevertheless, true to form in every detail.

The trilobite, in turn, changed to a brilliantly-hued star-fish with active, wriggling tentacles. The star-fish became a crab, and the crab, a porpoise swimming about in the air as if it had

been water. The porpoise then became a huge green lizard that crawled about the floor.

Soon the lizard grew large webbed wings, its tail shortened, its jaws lengthened out with a pelicanlike pouch beneath them, and its body seemed partially covered with scales of a rusty black color. I afterward learned that this was a phantasmic representation of a pterodactyl, or prehistoric flying reptile. To me, in my terrified condition, it looked like a creature from hell.

The thing stood erect, stretched its wings and beat the air as if to try them; then rose and circled twice about the room, flapping lazily like a heron, and once more alighted in the middle of the floor.

It folded its wings carefully, and I noticed many new changes taking place. The scales were becoming feathers—the legs lengthened out and were encased in a thick, scaly skin. The claws thickened into two-toed feet, like those of an ostrich. The head also looked ostrich-like, while the wings were shortened and feathered, but not plumed. The bird was much larger than any ostrich or emu I have ever seen, and strutted about majestically, its head nearly touching the ceiling.

Soon it, too, stopped in the center of the room—the neck grew shorter and shorter—the feathers became fur—the wings lengthened into arms which reached below the knees, and I was face to face with a huge, gorilla-like creature. It roared horribly, casting quick glances about the room, its deep-set eyes glowing like coals of fire.

I felt that my end had come, but could make no move to escape. I wanted to get up and leap through the window, but my nerveless limbs would not function. As I looked, the fur on the creature turned to a thin covering of hair, and it began to assume a manlike form. I closed my eyes and shuddered.

When I opened them a moment later, I beheld what might have been the "missing link," half man, half beast. The face, with its receding forehead and beetling brows, was apelike and yet manlike. Wrapped about its loins was a large tiger skin. In its right hand it brandished a huge, knotted club.

Gradually it became more manlike and less apelike. The club changed to a spear, the spear to a sword, and I beheld a Roman soldier, fully accoutered for battle, with helmet, armor, target and sandals.

The Roman soldier became a knight, and the knight a musketeer. The musketeer became a colonial soldier.

At that instant there was a crash of glass, and the branch of a tree projected through the window on the right of the fireplace. The shade flew up with a snap, and the soldier disappeared, as a brilliant flash of lightning illuminated the room.

I rushed to the window, and saw that the overhanging limb of an elm had been broken off by the wind and hurled trough the glass. The rain was coming in in torrents.

The housekeeper, who had heard the noise, appeared in the doorway. Seeing the rain blowing in at the window, she left and returned a moment later with a hammer, tacks and a folded sheet. I tacked the sheet to the window frame with difficulty, on account of the strong wind, and again pulled down the shade.

Mrs. Rhodes retired.

I consulted my watch. It lacked just one minute of midnight.

Only half of the night gone! Would I be strong enough to endure the other half?

This Story Will be Concluded in the Next Issue of WEIRD TALES. Tell Your News-dealer to Reserve a Copy for You.

You Will Find Blood-Curdling Realism and a Smashing Surprise in

The MYSTERY *of* BLACK JEAN

By JULIAN KILMAN

AYE, SIR, since you have asked, there has been many a guess about where Black Jean finally disappeared to.

He was a French-Canadian and a weed of a man—six-feet-five in his socks; his eyes were little and close together and black; he wore a long thin mustache that drooped; and he was as hairy as his two bears.

He just drifted up here to the North, I guess, picking up what scanty living he could by wrestling with the bears and making them wrestle each other. 'Twas in the King William hotel that many's the time I've seen Black Jean drink whisky by the cupful and feed it to the bears. Yes, he was interesting, especially to us boys.

Along about the time the French-Canadian and his trick animals were getting to be an old story, there comes—begging your pardon—a Yankee, who said he would put up a windmill at Morgan's Cove if he could get the quicklime to make the mortar with.

Black Jean said he knew how to make lime and if they would give him time he would put up a kiln. So the French-Canadian went to work and built that limekiln you see standing there.

I was a youngster then, and I know how Black Jean, a little later, built his cabin. I used to hide and watch him and his bears. They worked like men together, with an ugly-looking woman that had joined them. They put up the cabin, the bears doing most of the heavy lifting work.

The place he picked for the cabin—over there where that clump of trees. . . . No, not that way—more to the right, half a mile about—that place is called "Split Hill," because there is a deep crack in the rock made by some earthquake. The French-Canadian built his cabin across the crack, and as the woman quarreled with him about the bears sleeping in the cabin he made a trap-door in the floor of the building and stuck a small log down it, so the bears could climb up and down from their den below.

The kiln, you can see for yourself, is a pit-kiln, so called because it is in the side of a hill and the limestone is fed from the top and the fuel from the bottom. Like a big chimney it works, and

when Black Jean got the fire started and going good it would roar up through the stone and cook it. You could see the blaze for a mile.

One day Black Jean came to the King William looking for that Yankee. Seems that individual hadn't paid for his lime. When Black Jean didn't find him at the tavern he started for the Cove.

I have never known who struck first; but they say the Yankee called Black Jean a damn frog-eater and there was a fight; and that afternoon the French-Canadian came to the tavern with his bears and all three of them got drunk. Black Jean used to keep a muzzle on the larger of the bears, but by tilting the brute's head he could pour whisky down its throat. They got pretty drunk, and then someone dared Black Jean to wrestle the muzzled bear.

There was a big tree standing in front of the tavern, and close by was a worn-out pump having a big iron handle. Black Jean and the bear went at it under the tree, the two of them clinching and hugging and swearing until they both gasped for air. This day the big bear was rougher than usual, and Black Jean lost his temper. It was his custom when he got in too tight a place to kick the bear in the stomach; and this time he began using his feet.

Suddenly we heard a rip of clothing. The bear had unsheathed his claws; they were sharp as razors and tore Black Jean's clothing into shreds and brought blood. Black Jean broke loose, his eyes flashing, his teeth gritting. Like lightning, he grabbed his dirk and leaped at the brute and jabbed the knife into its eye and gave a quick twist. The eyeball popped out and hung down by shreds alongside the bear's jaw.

Never can I forget the human-sounding shriek that bear gave, and how my father caught me up and scrambled behind the tree as the bear started for Black Jean. But the animal was near blinded, and Black Jean had time to jerk the iron handle out of the pump; and then, using it as if it didn't weigh any more than a spider's thought, he beat the bear over the head. He knocked it cold.

Then my father said: "That bear will kill you some day, Jean."

Black Jean stuck the iron pump handle back into its place.

"*Bagosh!* you t'ink dat true?" he sneered. "Mebbe I keel *her*, eh?"

Our place was next to the piece where Black Jean lived, and it was only next morning we heard a loud yelling over at Split Hill. I was a little fellow but spry, and when I reached Black Jean's cabin I was ahead of my father. I saw the French-Canadian leaning against a stump all alone, the blood streaming from his face.

"By God, M'sieu!" he blurted, when my father came up. "She scrat' my eye out."

My father thought he meant the woman.

"Who did?" he asked.

"Dat dam' bear," said Black Jean. "She just walk up an' steeck her foots in my eye."

Father caught hold of Black Jean and helped him to the cabin.

"Which bear was it?" he asked.

Black Jean slumped forward without answering. He had fainted.

I helped father get him into the house—he was more than one man could carry—and just as we went inside there was a growling and snarling, and the big muzzled bear went sliding down that pole to her nest.

JULIAN KILMAN
Will Have Another Story
In The April
WEIRD TALES

"The Affair of the Man in Scarlet"
It's a Powerful
Tale With a Terrifying Climax

Well, we looked all around for the woman, expecting to get her help: but we couldn't find her, which was the first we knew that she had left Black Jean.

It took the French-Canadian's eye two or three months to heal, and then he came to our place to get something to wear over the empty socket. So father hammered out a circular piece of copper about twice the size of a silver dollar and bored a hole in opposite sides for a leather thong to hold it in place. Black Jean always wore it after that. He seemed vain of that piece of copper, for he used to keep it polished and shined until it glowed on a bright day like a bit of fire

THAT fall the settlers opened up the first school in the district and imported a woman teacher from "The States."

I must tell you about that teacher. She was a thin, little mite of a thing that you would think the wind would blow away. Some said she was pretty and some that she wasn't. I could have called her pretty if her eyes hadn't been so black—hereabouts you don't see many eyes that are black—brown, maybe, and blue and gray, but not black. Fact is, there were just two people in these parts having those black eyes: Black Jean and the little mite of a school teacher.

Well she came. And she hadn't been here a month before it was noticed that Black Jean was coming to town more regular. And, what is more, he was coming down by the school and waiting around there with his bears.

This went on. They say that at first she didn't pay any attention to him, but I can't speak for that as I was too young. But in time there was talk and it came to me: then I watched. And I remember one afternoon after the teacher let us out we all went over to where the bears were. The teacher followed.

Black Jean was grinning and showing his white teeth.

"Beautiful ladee," says he. "Sooch eyes, mooch black like the back of a water-bug."

Teacher smiled and said something I couldn't understand. It must have been French. I had never seen a Frenchman around women before, and Black Jean's manners were new to me. Here was a big weed of a man bowing and scraping and standing with his cap in his hand. We boys laughed at that —holding his cap in his hand.

The long and short of it was the French-Canadian was sparking the school teacher. And everybody talked about it, of course; they said it was a shame; they said if she didn't have sense enough to see what kind of a man he was, someone should tell her.

I have often wondered since what would have happened if anybody *had* gone to that woman with stories of Black Jean. I know I'd never dared to, because, without knowing why, I was afraid of her. I guess maybe that is why the others didn't, either.

There was no mistaking she was encouraging to Black Jean. She didn't seem to object in the slightest to his attentions, and I can see them yet: her, little and pretty and in a white dress, and Black Jean lingering there with his bears, dirty, and towering head and shoulders above her.

BLACK JEAN kept coming and people went on talking, and finally somebody said she had been to Split Hill.

And one day I began to understand it, too. It was the time she was punishing some pupils. Three of them were lined up before her, and she started along whacking the outstretched hands with a stout ruler. Right in front of where I was sitting stood Ben Anger. He was the smallest of the lot and was trembling like a leaf.

Her first clip at him must have raised a welt on his hands, because he whimpered. She hit him again, and he closed his fingers. At that she caught up the jackknife he'd been whittling at his desk with and pried at his fingers until the blood came.

Sitting where I was, I saw her face while she was at it. It had the expression of a female devil. I didn't say any-

thing to my folks about that; but I wasn't surprised when word came next week that we were to have a new teacher—the little one had gone to live with Black Jean.

Well, there was more talk—talk of rail-riding the pair of them out of the district. But nothing was done, and one evening, a month later, there was a rap at our door and the French-Canadian staggered in. He was carrying the school teacher in his arms.

"What has happened?" my father demanded.

"Dat dam' leetle bear," snarled Black Jean—"She try to keel Madam."

He laid the woman on the bed. She looked pretty badly cut up, and we sent for the doctor. Mother would only let her stay in the house that night, being shocked at the way she was living with the French-Canadian.

It turned out she wasn't much hurt, and father kept trying to find out just what had happened. But he couldn't. *I* knew, however. Most of my time, when I wasn't in school or running errands for the folks, I was spending watching that couple, and only that afternoon I had seen her stick a hot poker into the side of the smaller bear and wind it up into his fur until he screamed. And the bear must have bided his time and gone for her—those brutes were just like folks.

Next morning Black Jean came and got his woman, and I stole out and followed. I knew there would be more to it. I was right. The two of them went into the cabin, and pretty soon I heard a ruction and out comes Black Jean with the smaller bear and behind them the woman. She was carrying a rawhide whip.

The French-Canadian had a chain looped about each forepaw of the animal, and, pulling it under a tree, he tossed the free end of the chain over a stout branch and yanked the bear off his feet. Then he wound the end of the chain about the trunk of the tree and sat down. So the bear hung, his feet missed, and squirming and helpless.

And there in that clear day and warm sunshine, the woman started at the bear with the whip. She lashed it until it cried like a child. Black Jean watched the proceedings and grinned.

"Bah!" he shouted, after the woman had begun to tire. "She t'ink you foolin'. Heet harder. Heet the eyes!"

Again the woman went at it and kept it up until the bear quit moaning, and its head drooped and its body got limp. I was feeling sick at the sight, and I stole away.

But next morning, when I crawled back, there was the bear still hanging. It was dead.

THAT woman was a fair mate for Black Jean.

She kept him working steady over here to this kiln—most any night you could see the reflection of the blaze—and it was something to watch Black Jean when he was feeding his fire with the light playing on that copper piece and making it look like a big red eye flashing in the night. I saw it many times.

And it was noticed that Black Jean wasn't getting drunk any more, and he wasn't wrestling the one-eyed bear any more. He had good reason for that. I began to believe Black Jean was afraid of that brute.

But he made it work for him in the kiln, using the whip, and it was a curious animal, growling and snarling most of the time, as it pulled and lifted big sticks of wood and lugged them to the kiln.

When Black Jean wasn't working he was over at the cabin where he would follow the woman around like a dog. She could make him do anything. She was getting thinner and crosser, and I was more afraid of her than ever I was of Black Jean.

Once she caught me watching her from my spying-place in a tree. She had been petting the one-eyed bear, rubbing his snout and feeding him sugar. She ran to the house and got a rifle and, my friends, I came down out of that tree lickety split.

When I reached the ground she didn't say a word—just let her eyes rest on mine. After that I was more careful.

THEN something happened.

I was hoeing corn one afternoon in a field next the road when I spied a woman coming along from the village. She was big and blowsy and was wearing a shawl. I knew she was headed for Black Jean's, because she climbed through the fence on his side of the road.

Keeping her in sight, I followed along my side and crossed over when I came to a place where she couldn't see me. I followed her because I knew she was the woman who had come to Black Jean when he first landed in the district. She walked up to the cabin, and I was wondering who she would find home, when out comes Black Jean.

"Sacre!" he exclaimed, putting one hand to his eye. "Spik queeck! Ees it Marie?"

"Yes," the woman said. "I have come back."

Black Jean looked around fearfully.

"Wat you want?" he demanded.

"I'd like to know who knocked your eye out," she laughed.

Black Jean did not laugh.

"You steal hunder' dollar from me an' run 'way," he snarled. *"Bagosh!* You give me dat monee."

"You fool!" said the woman. "You think I don't know where you got that money? You killed—"

A sound of rustling leaves in the wood nearby interrupted.

"Sah!" hissed Black Jean, his face blanching. "For de love o' God, nod so loud."

He listened a moment; then his expression grew crafty. His teeth showed, and he went close to the woman and said something and started into the cabin.

The next instant I knew someone else had seen them. It was no other than the little ex-school teacher—and she was running away! I lay still a moment, scared out of my wits. Then I went home.

"Did you see Black Jean's wife?" my mother asked.

"You mean the school teacher woman?" I said.

"Yes," my mother said. "Who else?"

"I did," I said, "a while ago."

"I mean just now," said my mother, breathing quick. "She rushed in here, right into the house, and before I could stop her she snatched your father's rifle from the wall and ran out."

I DIDN'T wait to hear more.

I set off through the fields for Black Jean's. Before I had run half the distance, I heard shooting, and it was father's rifle—I knew the sound of her only too well.

When I got to my spying-place it was all quiet at Black Jean's. I could not see a thing stirring about the cabin.

Then I thought of mother and started home. Father had gone over to the Cove that morning, with a load of wheat for the Yankee's mill, and wasn't to get back until late. So mother and I waited.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when we heard father's wagon, and I rushed outside.

"Hello, son," he exclaimed. "You're up late. And here's mother, too."

Father listened to what we told him, without saying a word.

"Well," he said, when we had finished. "I don't really see anything to worry about. Black Jean can take care of himself. Look there!"

He was pointing over here to this limekiln.

"Jean's had her loaded for a week," said father, "waiting for better weather."

Later, in the house, my father said: "It is none of our business, anyway."

And in a little he added, as if worried some: "But I am going over there after my rifle."

THE following Sunday—three days later—father and I went to Black Jean's to get the rifle.

The door of the cabin opened, and the little woman came out. She was carrying the rifle. Somehow, she looked thin and old and her hands were like

claws. But her eyes were bright and as sharp as the teeth of a weasel trap.

"I suppose," she said, as cool as a cucumber and as sweet as honey, "you have come after the rifle."

"That is what," said my father, sternly.

She handed it over.

"Please apologize to your wife for me," she said, "for the sudden way I took it. I was in a hurry. I saw a deer down by the marsh."

"Did you get the deer?" I piped in.

"No," she said. "I missed it."

Father and I started away. But he stopped and called: "Where is Black Jean this morning?"

"Black Jean!" she laughed. "Oh, he's got another sweetheart. He has gone away with her."

"Good-day," said father.

"Good-day," said she.

And that was the end of that.

Neither Black Jean nor the big blowsy woman was ever seen again, nor hide nor hair of them. But there was lots of talk. You see, there hadn't been any deer in these parts for many years; and besides it just was not possible for so well known a character as Black Jean to vanish so completely, without leaving a single trace.

Well, finally someone laid information in the county seat and over comes a smart young chap. He questioned father and mother and made me tell him all I knew, and took it all down in writing; then he gets a constable and goes over and they arrest the little black-eyed woman.

There was no trouble about it. They say she just smiled and asked what she was being arrested for—and they told her for the murder of Black Jean. She didn't say anything to that; only asked that someone feed the big one-eyed bear during the time she was locked up.

Then the people started coming. They came on horseback, they came afoot, they came in canoes, they came in lumber wagons—no matter how far away they lived—and brought their own food along. I calculate near every soul in the district turned out and made it a sort of general holiday and lay-off, for certain it is that no one cared anything about Black Jean himself.

Every inch of the land hereabouts was searched; they poked along the entire length of that earthquake crack, and in the clearings, and in the bush, looking for fresh-turned earth. But they could not find a thing—not a thing!

Now you gentlemen know that you can't convict a person for murder unless you have got positive proof that murder's been done—the dead body itself. Which was the case here, and that smart youth from the county seat had to let the little woman go free. So she came back to the cabin, living there as quiet as you please and minding her own precise business.

HERE is a pocket-piece I have had for some time. You can see for yourself that it is copper.

It is the thing my father made for Black Jean to wear over his bad eye. I found that piece of copper two years after the little woman died—near twelve years after Black Jean disappeared. And I found it in the ashes and stone at the bottom of the limekiln standing there, half-tumbled down.

A lot of people hereabouts say it doesn't follow that Black Jean's body was burned in the kiln—cremated, I guess you city chaps would call it. They can't figure out how the mischief a little ninety-pound woman could have lugged those two bodies after she shot them with my father's rifle, the distance from the cabin to the kiln—a good half mile and more.

They point out that the body of Black Jean must have weighed over two hundred pounds, not to mention that the other woman was big and fat. But they make me weary.

It is as simple as the nose on your face: *The big one-eyed bear did the job for her!*

THE GRAVE

A Story of Stark Terror

By Orville R. Emerson

THE END of this story was first brought to my attention when Fromwiller returned from his trip to Mount Kemmel with a very strange tale indeed and one extremely hard to believe.

But I believed it enough to go back to the Mount with "From" to see if we could discover anything more. And after digging for awhile at the place where "From's" story began, we made our way into an old dugout that had been caved in, or at least where all the entrances had been filled with dirt, and there we found, written on German correspondence paper, a terrible story.

We found the story on Christmas day, 1918, while making the trip in the colonel's machine from Watou, in Flanders, where our regiment was stationed. Of course, you have heard of Mount Kemmel in Flanders: more than once it figured in newspaper reports as it changed hands during some of the fiercest fighting of the war. And when the Germans were finally driven from this point of vantage, in October, 1918, a retreat was started which did not end until it became a race to see who could get into Germany first.

The advance was so fast that the victorious British and French forces had no time to bury their dead, and, terrible as it may seem to those who have not seen it, in December of that year one could see the rotting corpses of the unburied dead scattered here and there over the top of Mount Kemmel. It was a place of ghastly sights and sickening odors. And it was there that we found this tale.

With the chaplain's help, we translated the story, which follows:

FOR two weeks I have been buried alive! For two weeks I have not seen daylight, nor heard the sound of another person's voice. Unless I can find something to do, besides this everlasting digging, I shall go mad. So I shall write. As long as my candles last, I will pass part of the time each day in setting down on paper my experiences.

"Not that I need to do this in order to remember them. God knows that when I get out the first thing I shall do will be to try to forget them! But if I should *not* get out! . . .

"I am an Ober-lieutenant in the Imperial German Army. Two weeks ago my regiment was holding Mount Kemmel in Flanders. We were surrounded on three sides and subjected to a terrific artillery fire, but on account of the commanding position we were ordered to hold the Mount to the last man. Our engineers, however, had made things very comfortable. Numerous deep dugouts had been constructed, and in them we were comparatively safe from shell-fire.

"Many of these had been connected by passageways so that there was a regular little underground city, and the majority of the garrison never left the protection of the dugouts. But even under these conditions our casualties were heavy. Lookouts had to be maintained above ground, and once in a while a direct hit by one of the huge railway guns would even destroy some of the dugouts.

"A little over two weeks ago—I can't be sure, because I have lost track of the exact number of days—the usual shelling was increased a hundred fold. With about twenty others, I was sleeping in one of the shallower dugouts. The tremendous increase in shelling awakened me with a start, and my first impulse was to go at once into a deeper dugout, which was connected to the one I was in by an underground passageway.

"It was a smaller dugout, built a few feet lower than the one I was in. It had been used as a sort of a storeroom and no one was supposed to sleep there. But it seemed safer to me, and, alone, I crept into it. A thousand times since I have wished I had taken another man with me. But my chances for doing it were soon gone.

"I had hardly entered the smaller dugout when there was a tremendous explosion behind me. The ground shook as if a mine had exploded below us. Whether that was indeed the case, or whether some extra large caliber explosive shell had struck the dugout behind me, I never knew.

"After the shock of the explosion had passed I went back to the passageway. When about halfway along it, I found the timbers above had fallen, allowing the earth to settle, and my way was effectually blocked.

"So I returned to the dugout and waited alone through several hours of terrific shelling. The only other entrance to the dugout I was in was the main entrance from the trench above, and all those who had been above ground had gone into dugouts long before this. So I could not expect anyone to enter while the shelling continued; and when it ceased there would surely be an attack.

"As I did not want to be killed by a grenade thrown down the entrance; I remained awake in order to rush out at the first signs of cessation of the bombardment and join what comrades there might be left on the hill.

"After about six hours of the heavy bombardment, all sound above ground seemed to cease. Five minutes went by, then ten; surely the attack was coming. I rushed to the stairway leading out to the air. I took a couple of strides up the stairs. There was a blinding flash and a deafening explosion.

"I felt myself falling. Then darkness swallowed everything."

HOW long I lay unconscious in the dugout I never knew.

"But after what seemed like a long time, I practically grew conscious of a dull ache in my left arm. I could not move it. I opened my eyes and found only darkness. I felt pain and a stiffness all over my body.

"Slowly I rose, struck a match, found a candle and lit it and looked at my watch. It had stopped. I did not know how long I had remained there unconscious. All noise of bombardment had ceased. I stood and listened for some time, but could hear no sound of any kind.

"My gaze fell on the stairway entrance. I started in alarm. The end of the dugout, where the entrance was, was half filled with dirt.

"I went over and looked closer. The entrance was completely filled with dirt at the bottom, and no light of any kind could be seen from above. I went to the passageway to the other dugout, although I remembered it had caved in. I examined the fallen timbers closely. Between two of them I could feel a slight movement of air. Here was an opening to the outside world.

"I tried to move the timbers, as well as I could with one arm, only to precipitate a small avalanche of dirt which filled the crack. Quickly I dug at the dirt until again I could feel the movement of air. This might be the only place where I could obtain fresh air.

"I was convinced that it would take some little work to open up either of the passageways, and I began to feel hungry. Luckily, there was a good supply of canned foods and hard bread, for the officers had kept their rations stored in this dugout. I also found a keg of water and about a dozen bottles of wine, which I discovered to be very good. After I had relieved my appetite and finished one of the bottles of wine, I

felt sleepy and, although my left arm pained me considerably, I soon dropped off to sleep.

"The time I have allowed myself for writing is up, so I will stop for today. After I have performed my daily task of digging tomorrow, I shall again write. Already my mind feels easier. Surely help will come soon. At any rate, within two more weeks I shall have liberated myself. Already I am half way up the stairs. And my rations will last that long. I have divided them so they will."

"YESTERDAY I did not feel like writing after I finished my digging. My arm pained me considerably. I guess I used it too much.

"But today I was more careful with it, and it feels better. And I am worried again. Twice today big piles of earth caved in, where the timbers above were loose, and each time as much dirt fell into the passageway as I can remove in a day. Two days more before I can count on getting out by myself.

"The rations will have to be stretched out some more. The daily amount is already pretty small. But I shall go on with my account.

"From the time I became conscious I started my watch, and since then I have kept track of the days. On the second day I took stock of the food, water, wood, matches, candles, etc., and found a plentiful supply for two weeks at least. At that time I did not look forward to a stay of more than a few days in my prison.

"Either the enemy or ourselves will occupy the hill I told myself, because it is such an important position. And whoever now holds the hill will be compelled to dig in deeply in order to hold it.

"So to my mind it was only a matter of a few days until either the entrance or the passageway would be cleared, and my only doubts were as to whether it would be friends or enemies that would discover me. My arm felt better, although I could not use it much, and so I spent the day in reading an old newspaper which I found among the food supplies, and in waiting for help to come. What a fool I was! If I had only worked from the start, I would be just that many days nearer deliverance.

"On the third day I was annoyed by water, which began dripping from the roof and seeping in at the sides of the dugout. I cursed that muddy water, then, as I have often cursed such dugout nuisances before, but it may be that I shall yet bless that water and it shall save my life.

"But it certainly made things uncomfortable; so I spent the day in moving my bunk, food and water supplies, candles, etc., up into the passageway. For a space of about ten feet it was unobstructed, and, being slightly higher than the dugout, was dryer and more comfortable. Besides, the air was much better here, as I had found that practically all my supply of fresh air came in through the crack between the timbers, and I thought maybe the rats wouldn't bother me so much at night. Again I spent the balance of the day simply in waiting for help.

"It was not until well into the fourth day that I really began to feel uneasy. It suddenly became impressed on my consciousness that I had not heard the sound of a gun, or felt the earth shake from the force of a concussion, since the fatal shell that had filled the entrance. What was the meaning of the silence? Why did I hear no sounds of fighting? It was as still as the grave.

"What a horrible death to die! Buried Alive! A panic of fear swept over me. But my will and reason reasserted itself. In time, I should be able to dig myself out by my own efforts It would take time but it could be done.

"So, although I could not use my left arm as yet, I spent the rest of that day and all of the two following days in digging dirt from the entrance and carrying it back into the far corner of the dugout.

"On the seventh day after regaining consciousness I was tired and stiff from my unwanted exertions of the three previous days. I could see by this time that it was a matter of weeks—two or three, at least—before I could hope to

liberate myself. I might be rescued at an earlier date, but, without outside aid, it would take probably three more weeks of labor before I could dig my way out.

"Already dirt had caved in from the top, where the timbers had sprung apart, and I could repair the damage to the roof of the stairway only in a crude way with one arm. But my left arm was much better. With a day's rest, I would be able to use it pretty well. Besides, I must conserve my energy. So I spent the seventh day in rest and prayer for my speedy release from a living grave.

"I also reapportioned my food on the basis of three more weeks. It made the daily portions pretty small, especially as the digging was strenuous work. There was a large supply of candles, so that I had plenty of light for my work. But the supply of water bothered me. Almost half of the small keg was gone in the first week. I decided to drink only once a day.

"The following six days were all days of feverish labor, light eating and even lighter drinking. But, despite all my efforts, only a quarter of the keg was left at the end of two weeks. And the horror of the situation grew on me. My imagination would not be quiet. I would picture to myself the agonies to come, when I would have even less food and water than at present. My mind would run on and on—to death by starvation—to the finding of my emaciated body by those who would eventually open up the dugout—even to their attempts to reconstruct the story of my end.

"And, adding to my physical discomfort, were the swarming vermin infesting the dugout and my person. A month had gone by since I had had a bath, and I could not now spare a drop of water even to wash my face. The rats had become so bold that I had to leave a candle burning all night in order to protect myself in my sleep.

"Partly to relieve my mind, I started to write this tale of my experiences. It did not as a relief at first, but now, as I read it over, the growing terror of this awful place grips me. I would cease writing, but some impulse urges me to write each day.

THREE weeks have passed since I was buried in this living tomb.

"Today I drank the last drop of water in the keg. There is a pool of stagnant water on the dugout floor—dirty, slimy and alive with vermin—always standing there, fed by drippings from the roof. As yet I cannot bring myself to touch it.

"Today I divided up my food supply for another week. God knows the portions were already small enough! But there have been so many cave-ins recently that I can never finish clearing the entrance in another week.

"Sometimes I feel that I shall never clear it. But I *must!* I can never bear to die here. I must will myself to escape, and *I shall escape!*

"Did not the captain often say that the will to win was half the victory? I shall rest no more. Every waking hour must be spent in removing the treacherous dirt.

"Even my writing must cease."

"OH, GOD! I am afraid, *afraid!*

"I must write to relieve my mind. Last night I went to sleep at nine by my watch. At twelve I woke to find myself in the dark, frantically digging with my bare hands at the hard sides of the dugout. After some trouble I found a candle and lit it.

"The whole dugout was upset. My food supplies were lying in the mud. The box of candles had been spilled. My finger nails were broken and bloody from clawing at the ground.

"The realization dawned upon me that I had been out of my head. And then came the fear—dark, raging fear—fear of insanity. I have been drinking the stagnant water from the floor for days. I do not know how many.

"I have only about one meal left, but I must save it."

"I HAD a meal today. For three days I have been without food.

"But today I caught one of the rats that infest the place. He was a big

one, too. Gave me a bad bite, but I killed him. I feel lots better today. Have had some bad dreams lately, but they don't bother me now.

"That rat was tough, though. Think I'll finish this digging and go back to my regiment in a day or two."

"HEAVEN have mercy! I must be out of my head half the time now.

"I have absolutely no recollection of having written that last entry. And I feel feverish and weak.

"If I had my strength, I think I could finish clearing the entrance in a day or two. But I can only work a short time at a stretch.

"I am beginning to give up hope."

"WILD spells come on me oftener now. I awake tired out from exertions, which I cannot remember.

"Bones of rats, picked clean, are scattered about, yet I do not remember eating them. In my lucid moments I don't seem to be able to catch them, for they are too wary and I am too weak.

"I get some relief by chewing the candles, but I dare not eat them all. I am afraid of the dark, I am afraid of the rats, but worst of all is the hideous fear of myself.

"My mind is breaking down. I must escape soon, or I will be little better than a wild animal. Oh, God, send help! I am going mad!"

"Terror, desperation, despair—is this the end?"

"FOR a long time I have been resting.

"I have had a brilliant idea. Rest brings back strength. The longer a person rests the stronger they should get. I have been resting a long time now. Weeks or months, I don't know which. So I must be very strong. I feel strong. My fever has left me. So listen! There is only a little dirt left in the entrance way. I am going out and crawl through it. Just like a mole. Right out into the sunlight. I feel much stronger than a mole. So this is the end of my little tale. A sad tale, but one with a happy ending. Sunlight! A very happy ending."

AND that was the end of the manuscript. There only remains to tell Fromwiller's tale.

At first, I didn't believe it. But now I do. I shall put it down, though, just as Fromwiller told it to me, and you can take it or leave it as you choose.

"Soon after we were billeted at Watou," said Fromwiller, I decided to go out and see Mount Kemmel. I had heard that things were rather gruesome out there, but I was really not prepared for the conditions that I found. I had seen unburied dead around Roulers and in the Argonne, but it had been almost two months since the fighting on Mount Kemmel and there were still many unburied dead. But there was another thing that I had never seen, and that was the *buried living!*

"As I came up to the highest point of the Mount, I was attracted by a movement of loose dirt on the edge of a huge shell hole. The dirt seemed to be falling in to a common center, as if the dirt below was being removed. As I watched, suddenly I was horrified to see a long, skinny human arm emerge from the ground.

"It disappeared, drawing back some of the earth with it. There was a movement of dirt over a larger area, and the arm reappeared, together with a man's head and shoulders. He pulled himself up out of the very ground, as it seemed, shook the dirt from his body like a huge, gaunt dog, and stood erect. I never want to see such another creature!

"Hardly a strip of clothing was visible, and, what little there was, was so torn and dirty that it was impossible to tell what kind it had been. The skin was drawn tightly over the bones, and there was a vacant stare in the protruding eyes. It looked like a corpse that had lain in the grave a long time.

"This apparition looked directly at me, and yet did not appear to see me. He looked as if the light bothered him. I spoke, and a look of fear came over his face. He seemed filled with terror.

"I stepped toward him, shaking loose a piece of barbed wire which had caught in my puttees. Quick as a flash, he turned and started to run from me.

"For a second I was too astonished to move. Then I started to follow him. In a straight line he ran, looking neither to the right or left. Directly ahead of him was a deep and wide trench. He was running straight toward it. Suddenly it dawned on me that he did not see it.

"I called out, but it seemed to terrify him all the more, and with one last lunge he stepped into the trench and fell. I heard his body strike the other side of the trench and fell with a splash into the water at the bottom.

"I followed and looked down into the trench. There he lay, with his head bent back in such a position that I was sure his neck was broken. He was half in and half out of the water, and as I looked at him I could scarcely believe what I had seen. Surely he looked as if he had been dead as long as some of the other corpses, scattered over the hillside. I turned and left him as he was.

"Buried while living, I left him unburied when dead."

COMING!

"The Forty Jars"

A STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURES

By Ray McGillivray

Will Appear in the Next

WEIRD TALES

A Fantastic Story
With An Odd Twist
At The End

Hark! The Rattle!

By Joel Townsley Rogers

WE SAT in the Purple Lily—Tain Dirk, that far too handsome young man, with me.

I drank coffee; Tain Dirk drank liquor—secretly and alone. The night was drenched with sweating summer heat, but I felt cold as ice. Presently we went up to the Palm Grove Roof, where Bimi Tal was to dance.

"Who is this Bimi Tal, Hammer?" Dirk asked me, drumming his fingers.

"A woman."

"You're a queer one, Jerry Hammer!" said Dirk, narrowing his cold yellow eyes.

Still he drummed his blunt fingers. Sharp—*tat! tat! tat!* Something deep inside me—my liver, perhaps—shivered and grew white at hearing that klirring sound.

I didn't answer him right away. Slowly I sent up smoke rings to circle the huge stars. We sat in a cave of potted palms close by the dancing floor. Over us lay blue-black night, strange and deep. Yellow as roses were the splotches of stars swimming down the sky.

"It shows you've been away from New York, Dirk, if you don't know Bimi Tal. She's made herself more famous as a dancer that ever was Ynecita. Some mystery is supposed to hang about her; and those simple children of New York love mysteries."

"I've been away three years," said Dirk sulkily, his eyes contracting.

"That long? It was three years ago that Ynecita was killed."

"Well?" asked Dirk. His finger-drumming droned away.

"I thought you might have known her, Dirk."

"I?" His wide, thin lips twitched. "Why, Ynecita was common to half New York!"

"But once," I said, "once, it may be assumed, she was true to one man only, Tain Dirk."

I'm not interested in women, said Dirk.

That was like him. He drank liquor only—secretly and alone.

"I was interested in Ynecita, Dirk. We used to talk together—"

"She talked to you?" repeated Dirk.

"Strange how she died! No trace, no one arrested. Yet she'd had her lovers. Sometimes I think, Dirk, we'll find the beast who killed Ynecita."

Tain Dirk touched my wrist. His blunt fingers were cold and clammy. Incomprehensible that women had loved his hands! Yet they were artist's hands, and could mold and chisel. Wet clay, his hands!

"What makes you say that, Hammer?"

I looked up at the stars. "It was a beast who killed Ynecita, Dirk. Some vile snake with blood as cold as this lemon ice. Those marks of teeth on her upper arm! Deep in, bringing blood!

What madman killed that girl? *Mad,* I say!"

Dirk twisted. He wiped his brown forehead, on which sweat glistened in little beads like scales. "Too hot a night to talk about such things, Hammer. Let's talk of something else. Tell me about this Bimi Tal."

"You'll see her soon enough," I said, watching him. "A girl of about your own age; you're not more than twenty-four, are you?"

"Born first of January, '99."

"And famous already!"

"Yes," said Tain Dirk. I guess you've heard of me."

"Oh, I've heard lots of you," I said; and saw he didn't like it.

"You've heard I'm fast with women, eh?" asked Dirk, after a pause.

"But Ynecita—"

"Why do you talk of *her?*" asked Dirk, irritably. "I never knew her."

"Those marks of teeth on Ynecita's arm—two sharp canines, sharp and hooked; barely scratching the skin—like fangs of a snake, Dirk—"

Tain Dirk's hand crept to his lips, which were thin, red, and dry. The light in his eyes darkened from yellow to purple. Softly his blunt fingers began to drum his lips. *Tat! tat! tat!* But silent as a snake in grass.

"A curious thing about teeth, Dirk—you're a sculptor; maybe you've observed it—a curious thing that no two are quite alike. We took prints, Dirk, of those marks in the arm of Ynecita—"

Dirk's thin lips opened. His coarsely-formed, but marvelously sensitive, fingers felt the hardness of his teeth. That gesture was sly. At once he knew I'd seen him. He crouched back in his chair, his strong, broad head drawn in between his shoulders.

"Who are you?" he hissed.

Again the klirring of his fingertips—a dusty drumming.

"Why, I am only Jerry Hammer—a wanderer, and a soldier of bad fortune."

"Who are you!"

"Brother of Stella Hammer, who was known as Ynecita, the dancer."

Upon the Palm Grove Roof, beneath those gigantic stars the orchestra began to play. A brass and cymbal tune. The air was hot. From far in the pit of streets rose up the noises of the city. Loud! Discord shot with flames. I trembled.

Tain Dirk's fingers drummed. His head commenced to sway.

BIMI TAL danced barefooted on the glazed umber tiles of the Roof.

Her dark red hair was free on her naked shoulders. *Stamp! stamp! stamp!* her feet struck flatly on the tiles. Her head was bent back almost to the level of her waist. Bracelets jangled on her wrists and ankles.

"I am the daughter of the morning!
. I shout, I dance, I laugh away. . . . ."

Shaking her clump of red hair; her strong muscled limbs weaving; laughing at me with all her eyes. How like she looked to a man dead long years before! How like her glances to the glances of Red Roane! On her breasts two glittering shields of spangles. About her waist a kirtle seemingly woven of long strands of marsh grass, rustling, shivering with whispers. The sinews of her trunk and limbs rippled beneath her clear brown skin.

The head of Tain Dirk swayed sideways, slowly. The drumming of his fingers on the table was a reiterative rattle. His eyes—liquid, subtle—dulled with a look near to stupidity, then blazed to golden fire. Thin and wide were his unsmiling lips. His tongue flicked them. *Tat! tat! tat!*

"She's a beauty!" whispered Dirk.

His terrible eyes seemed to call Bimi Tal as they had called other women. Mesmerism—what was it? Singing, she pranced toward the den of potted palms where we were sitting. Her skirt rustled like the marshes. Wind of summer.

Little searchlights, playing colored lights on Bimi Tal, grew darker. Red and violet deepened to brown and green. Still the hot stars above us. In that artificial paper Palm Grove, with the silky puffy women and the beefsteak-guzzling men looking stupidly, was born the mystery of the great savannahs.

Dirk's head nodding. Dirk's thin lips slowly opening. Dirk's golden eyes

glimmering. *Tat! tat! tat!* Dirk's steady fingers.

The great savannahs and the tropic marshes. Bimi Tal dancing. Stealthily, the music softened from that brass and cymbal tune. It rustled. It crawled. It reared fanged heads.

For a little while I did not see Bimi Tal nor Dirk, but the steamy Everglades. Winter noon. Grass leaves silvered by sea-wind; puddles stirring at the roots of the grasses. Silence booming like the loud silence of death

Bimi Tal was dancing her snake dance. Dirk's lips quivered.

The marsh wind makes a little stir (it is the whispering flute.) The marsh waters make a little moan (it is the violin).

III.

WHERE was the soul of Bimi Tal dwelling that tropic winter so many years ago? On her mother's breast, a little bud of love, crooned over with the song of sleep? Or meshed in bleeding poinsettia or rose? Or a soul yet unborn?

I close my eyes. The vision does not fade. Florida; the marshlands; winter noon. January's first day, 1899. Where was lovely Bimi Tal on that stifling day we saw the fanged thing coil, and death struck us there by Okechobee?

Your eyes, Bimi Tal, are the laughing eyes of Red Roane! . . .

Now the snake dance. The piccolo screams.

Life immortal in your glistening lips, Bimi Tal; in your deep bosom promise of everlasting fecundity. Passion and power of the earth! Life is immortal. Your laughing eyes, Bimi Tal, will never dull. Yet I saw Red Roane die. . . .

Beneath the shifting lights, Bimi Tal leaped and spun, scarcely treading the floor. Her eyes sparkled at me. She did not see Tain Dirk. *Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!* Her bare feet struck the tiles, tightening the muscles of her calves. Her bangles rang.

I could not keep my eyes from Dirk. His broad brown-and-golden head swayed continually. His thin lips worked, and I caught the flash of his teeth. His eyes drowsed, then flashed open with sudden flame. *Tat! tat! tat!* The rattling of his fingers was never still.

That swaying head! It was loaded with the wisdom of the serpent that harkens to the wind, swaying with the marsh grass, winding its golden coils, curving its neck to the sun—*Hark! The rattle!*

. . . Red is the sun. Two men plow through the marshes. O endless pain (the harsh viol quivers), a life struggles in the womb. Who will die, and what will die, that this new life may be born? Whimpering agony. And an old crone singing a song. . . .

All people who sat within the Palm Grove were hushed, watching Bimi Tal. Fat hands fanning powdered breasts; silk handkerchiefs wiping ox necks; sweat beneath armpits. Still heat. Far away thunder. The stars going by.

Music swelled. Beneath its discord sounded a steady drumming rhythm. The arms of Bimi Tal waved about her head. She shouted for joy of life.

The pale eyes of Dirk, basking in mystery, gleamed into fire, blazed up in fury and hate undying! His dry lips opened. I saw his teeth.

. . . Through the breast-high grasses surge on the two marching men. Their boots sough in the muck. (Softly strums the bass viol.) Something waiting in the marshes! Something with golden eyes and swaying head. *Hark! The rattle!* Beware, for death is in the path! . . .

Bimi Tal was close to Dirk, not seeing him. She laughed and waved her jangling arms at me. Dirk's eyes sparkled with madness, his lips were tightened terribly. Bimi Tal was almost over him. His fingers drummed. Louder played the music.

. . . *Hark! The rattle!* Gaily the two men plow through the bladed grasses. The coiled thing waits, hate within its eyes. They are nearer—nearer! (Drums begin to beat). . . .

In an avalanche of sound, crashed viol and violin, and stammering drum. Dirk's drawn head lunged upward with his shoulders, his lips opened and lifted.

Venomous his look. Deathly his intensity.

IV.

STRONG and young, fresh from the Cuban wars, Red Roane and I went north from the keys through the Everglades of Florida.

Through the fens as in God's first day. Through the reptile age, alive yet and crawling. Through strangling vegetation, which steams and rots beneath eternal suns. Through the everlasting Everglades, with their fern and frond and sorrowful, hoary cypress, Red Roane and I went north. Onward with laughter. What joy lay in our hearts! We sang many songs.

Fern and flower embracing in fecundity. Grasses thick with sap. Blossoms wilting at a touch. Mire teeming with creeping life. Above all, the gay sun. Beneath all, the coiling serpent eyes and the opened fangs. *Hark! The rattle!*

We sailed lagoons in crazy craft; dreamt on shady shores through sultry noons; shouted to the dead logs on river banks till they took fear, and dived and splashed away. We pitched our tents by black waters. We beat brave trails through the fens.

"I'd like to stay here forever," said Red Roane.

By what way I go, with what drinks I drink, in what bed I lie down, I remember you who got your prayer, Red Roane—you who are in the swamp grass and swamp water forever.

Beating our way slow and heavily, at high noon, of the new year's first day in 1899, near Okechobee in the marshes, came we two on a hidden hut. It was fashioned of the raff of the slough—dead fronds, rotting branches, withered marsh grasses. Its sad gray-green were in the living wilderness like a monument to death. Better the naked swamp. Better the clean quickmire for bed.

An old crone, moaning within that dreary hut, drowned out the sharp, short gasps of another woman. Red Roane came up singing, slapping his deep chest, swinging his muscular arms. Sunlight on his brown face, and sunlight in his red hair. At the hut's door, facing us, lounged a man with yellow eyes. Poor white trash. A gun was in his arm's crook. He spat tobacco juice at the earth. There was loathing, murder venom in his face!

Red Roane faltered back from that stare. He stopped short, and laughter left him. His brave eyes were troubled by that madman's hate. Yellow eyes staring—eyes of a rattlesnake!

An old Indian crone peered out beneath the crooked elbow of the ruffiian in the doorway, she who had been dolorously singing. With a scream, she thrust out her skinny old arm, pointing it at Red Roane.

"He dies!" she screamed. "We want his soul!"

Another woman, hidden, moaning within the hut; a woman in her travail. New life from the womb—a life must die! I grasped the arm of Red Roane.

"Come away!" I said. "Come away from these mad witches!"

In three steps that gray-green hovel was hidden in the cypresses. A dream it seemed. But we could yet hear the old witch woman singing. Something dragged at our heels, and it was not suction of the muck.

Toe to heel, Red Roane paced me, and we sang a song together. A crimson flower, short-stemmed, yellow-hearted, was almost beneath my boot. I stooped—who will not stoop to pick a crimson wild flower? A rattling, like the shaking of peas. A klirring like the drumming of a man's fingertips. *Hark! The rattle!*

A yawning head flashed beneath my hand, striking too low. Heavy as a hard-flung stone, the snake's head struck my ankle; yawning gullet, white-hooked fangs of the deathly rattlesnake. Out of the crimson flower that beast of gold and brown. Its yellow eyes flickered. Its thin lips were dry. How near I had touched to death!

"Thank God for those heavy boots, Jerry!"

With blazing eyes the snake writhed, coiling for another strike. Its sharp tail, pointed upward, vibrated continuously with dusty laughter. Its golden rippling body was thick as my arm.

Red Roane swung down his heavy marching stock. *Crash!* Its leaden end

struck that lunging mottled head. Halted in mid-strike, that evil wisdom splattered like an egg, brain pan ripped wide.

The rattler lashed in its last agony, its tremendously muscular tail beating the ground with thumping blows, its yellow eyes still blazing with hate, but closing fast in doom.

I tried to say "Thanks, Red!"

Some mesmerism in those yellow, dying eyes! Shaking with disgust, Red Roane bent above that foul fen watcher, put down his hand to pick up that stricken sin, over whose eyes thin eye-membrane already lowered in death.

"Don't touch it, Red! Wait till the sun goes down."

Hark! The rattle! Those opaque eyes shuttered back. Those yellow glances, though in mortal pain, were still furious and glistening. Those horny tail-bells clattered. Fangs in that shattered, insensate head yawned, closing in Red Roane's arm above the wrist.

I see him. Sweat upon his broad brown forehead; his laughing eyes astounded: his thick strong body shivering; wind stirring up his dark red hair. Behind him the brown-green marshes, grasses rippling, a stir going through their depths. His cheeks had never been so red.

Before I could move, he unlocked those jaws and hollow fangs, gripped hard in his arm with mortal rigor. He shivered now from the knees. His face went white.

"Cut!" he whispered. "I'll sit down."

With hunting knife I slashed his arm, deep driving four crossed cuts. He laughed, and tried to shout. Howling would have been more pleasant. I sucked those wounds, out of which slow blood was spouting from an artery. We panted now, both of us. He leaned heavily on my shoulder—he, the strong. I bound his arm, my own fingers so numb I fumbled at the work. Sweat on Red Roane's face was cold, and cold his wrists.

My arms clung about him. He swayed, almost toppling, clutching at grass stems with fading laughter. I picked up his marching stock and beat that golden, gory thing within the mire. Beat it till clay-white flesh, and bone and skin were one with the mucky mire of the swamp. But still its heart ebbed with deep purple pulsing. A smashing blow, and that, too, died.

"It's over!" Grimly I flung the bloody stave into the swaying grass.

"Yes, Jerry," whispered Red Roane, "it's nearly over."

I could not believe it. Red Roane, the strong man, the shouter, the singer, the gay-hearted lover! Is death then, so much stronger than life?

"A woman, Jerry," he whispered, "in Havana—Dolores! She dances—"

"For God's sake, Red, wake up!"

"Dances at the—"

"Red! *Red Roane!* I'm here, boy!"

Out from the way, whence we had come, faintly I heard a cry. Who wept thus for the soul departing, sang *paean* for the dead? Was it wind over the stagnant grasses? Frail in the solitude, rose that wail again. The whimper of new-born life! In the squatter's hut the child had found its soul!

"Dolores!" whispered Red Roane. Beneath that brazen sky he whispered the name of love. "Dolores!"

Past a hundred miles of swamp, past a hundred miles of sea, did Dolores, the dancer, hear him calling her?

"Dolores!"

I hope she heard, for he was a good lad, though wild.

With a throat strangling in sobs, I sang to Red Roane. His eyes were closed, yet he heard me. Old campaign songs, songs of the march and the bivouac. Marchers' tunes.

Then he whispered for a lullaby, and, last of all, for a drinking song.

V.

BIMI TAL had danced up to us—Bimi Tal, daughter of Red Roane and of Dolores, the dancer.

She laughed and tossed her dark red hair. Her broad nostrils sucked in the hot night wind.

"I am the daughter of the morning!
"I shout, I dance, I laugh away.
"Follow, lover! Hear my warnings
"I, the laugher, do not stay. . . ."

Stamp! Stamp! Stamp! Her body rippled. She cast her eyes at me.

Tain Dirk's head was rising. His thin, dry, red lips opened wide. His golden eyes burned with undying hate. *Tat! tat! tat!* his fingers drummed.

"In a minute, Jerry," whispered Bimi Tal, not pausing from her dance.

Her lovely eyes looked downward, seeing Dirk. She screamed. The music silenced. She struck her arm at him, not knowing what she did.

Mad! the Man was mad! His jaw was opened wide. *He bit her arm above the wrist.*

Before the rush of frantic people had fallen over us, I struck his venomous face. With both fists, blow on blow. Blood came form his damned lips.

What madness had seized him I don't know. Likely it was memory surging back through dead life—the venom of the rattler, hate undying. But of that, who can say? A strange thing is memory.

Yet I knew for sure that to him, the mad sculptor, born in that hut in the hot savannahs, had passed the soul of the dying rattlesnake.

Hands dragged me back from him. I shouted and tore. He quivered, wounded heavily. His nervous fingers faintly clattered on the table, drumming with dreadful music. Police came in.

"Look!" I shouted to them. "Look at those marks of teeth on Bimi Tal's wrist. Two deep fangs. *There's the man who killed Yuecita, the dancer!*"

"Jungle Death"

By ARTEMUS CALLOWAY

Is a "Creepy" Yarn

You will find it in the April

WEIRD TALES

A "Spooky" Tale With a Grim Background

The GHOST GUARD

By BRYAN IRVINE

IF EVERY one of the sixty guards and officials at Granite River Prison had been asked for the name of the most popular guard on the force, there would have been sixty answers—"Asa Shores." If each of the fifteen hundred convicts in the prison had been asked which guard was most disliked by the convicts, fifteen hundred answers would have been the same—"Asa Shores!"

If some curious person had asked of each convict and each guard, "Who is considered the most desperate, the hardest, the shrewdest criminal in the prison?" the answer would have been unanimous, "Malcolm Hulsey, the 'lifer.'"

True, it does not seem reasonable that Asa Shores should be liked by every guard and official and disliked by every convict. To those not familiar with the duties of prison guards it would seem that Asa Shores' method of handling the convicts, if disapproved of by fifteen hundred convicts, would surely be disapproved of by at least one of the sixty guards. But the explanation is simple.

Asa Shores' great great-grandfather had followed the prisons as mariners follow the seas. Then Asa's grandfather took up the work and followed it, with an iron hand and an inflexible will, until one day a cell-made knife in the hands of a long-time "con" entered his back at a point where his suspenders crossed, deviating enough to the left to pierce his heart. Came next Asa Shores' father, who went down in attempting to quell the famous Stromberg break of 1895.

Asa, therefore, his prison methods impelled perhaps by heredity, looked upon every wearer of gray behind the walls as a convict, nothing more, nothing less. He neither abused or favored any convict. A one-year man was to Asa a convict and no better than the man who was serving a life sentence.

The crime for which any convict was sent up was of little moment to Asa; neither did he bother about who among the inmates were considered desperate. The fact that a man wore prison gray was sufficient, whether he be a six-months sneak-thief or a ninety-nine-year murderer.

When Asa shot and killed Richard ("Mutt") Allison, when the latter attempted to escape, the warden had said:

"There was really no need of killing that half-witted short-termer, Asa. He was doing only a year and was perfectly harmless. A shot in the leg or foot would have been better."

And Asa's reply had been:

"I had no idea who the man was, though I have seen him dozens of times, and I did not know how long he

was doing. But I would have made no difference if I had known. He was a convict, sir, and he was attempting to escape. If he was only half-witted, as you say, he should have been in the insane asylum, not in the penitentiary."

So that was that.

If Asa ever gave a convict a smile it had never been recorded. It is a known fact that he was never seen to frown upon a convict. He was, in short, the smileless, unyielding personification of "duty," and every convict hated him for what he was. When Asa shot he shot to kill—and he never missed. Four little white crosses on the bleak hillside near the prison proclaimed his flawless marksmanship.

Why was this big sandy-haired, steel-blue-eyed, middle-aged Asa Shores liked by his brother guards? There were many reasons why. It was as if Asa's unnatural, cold, vigilant, unfeeling attitude toward the convicts was offset each day when he came off duty by a healthy, wholesome desire to drop duty as a work-horse sheds an irritating harness. He was the life of the guards' quarters; a big good-natured, playful fellow, who thoroughly enjoyed a practical joke, whether he be the victim of the joke or the instigator. If he had a temper he had never allowed it to come to the surface. He excelled in all sports in the gymnasium, and somewhere, somehow, he found more funny stories than any other man on the force. The trite old saying that "he would give a friend the shirt off his back" fitted him like a new kid glove. He gave freely to his friends, and, in giving, seemed to find real joy.

After twelve years' service on the guardline, Asa was still an ordinary wall guard. This would seem discouraging to many; but not so to Asa. It was not generally known that he drew a larger salary than did the other wall guards. He was an excellent wall guard. Hence, he was kept on the wall, while newer men on the force were promoted to better positions. But Asa drew the salary of a shift captain and was therefore content.

He did not even seem to mind when he was taken from comfortable Tower Number One, morning shift, and detailed permanently to Tower Number Three on the "grave-yard" shift at night from eight P. M. to four A. M. This change was deemed necessary for several reasons. First, because Asa positively refused to discriminate between short-termers and long-termers, or desperate men and harmless "nuts," when using his rifle to stop a "break" or the attempt of a single convict to escape.

The men being locked in their cells at night, Asa, as a night guard, would have little opportunity to practice rifle shooting with a running convict as the target. Another reason for detailing him to Tower Number Three was because trouble was expected some night at that point in the yard, and with sure-fire Asa on the job the officials felt that any attempt of the convicts to escape would be promptly frustrated.

One of Asa's wholesome habits, when no convicts were near him, was singing. It was not singing, really, but Asa thought it was and he shortened the long, lonesome hours at night on Tower number three with songs—*song*, rather, because he knew and sang but one. It was not a late or popular song, and, as Asa sang it, it sounded like the frogs that croak in the marshes at night:

"When I die and am buried deep,
"I'll return at night to take a peep
"At those who hated me.
"I'll haunt their homes and spoil their sleep,
"Chill their blood; the skin will creep
"On those who hated me."

Not a pretty song; nor did it make cheerful those guards who passed near Tower Number Three while making the night rounds. But Asa loved that song.

IT WAS while the wall was being extended another two hundred feet to make room within the inclosure for a new cell house that Asa shot the "lifer," Malcolm Hubey.

The end wall, extending from Tower Number Three to Tower Number Four, had been torn down and the stones moved two hundred feet farther south to be used on the new wall. A temporary barbed-wire fence had been erected about the area in which the convicts worked on the new wall. Extra armed guards were stationed at intervals of fifty feet outside the inclosure to guard the working convicts.

Malcolm Hulsey had successfully feigned illness one day and was allowed to remain in his cell. Cell house guards had seen him lying in his bunk, only the top of his head showing above the blankets. At lock-up time the cell house guards making the count, saw a foot protruding from under the blankets in Hulsey's bunk and what they believed to be the top of his head showing at the head of the bed.

At ten-fifteen that night the eagle-eyed Asa Shores, on Tower Number Three, saw a dark figure slip under the lower wire of the temporary fence and run. Asa fired once and saw the man fall.

Then Asa, to comply with the prison rules, yelled "halt!" The command, of course, was needless, Hulsey having halted abruptly when a thirty-thirty rifle ball plowed through his shoulder.

After the convict had been carried to the hospital, his cell was opened by the curious guards. A cleverly carved wooden foot protruded from under the blankets at the foot of the bed, several bags of old clothing reposed under the blankets and a thatch of black horsehair showed at the head of the bed.

Before Hulsey left the hospital the new wall was completed. Tower Number Four, across from Tower Number Three, had been torn down and a new tower Number Four built on the new corner of the wall, two hundred feet farther south. On the other corner, across from New Tower Number Four, was New Tower Number Three. Old Tower Number Three was left standing until further orders. Asa Shores remained on the graveyard shift on Old Tower Number Three.

While off duty one day Asa, prowling about inside the walls, met Malcolm Hulsey. The "lifer" was still a bit pale and weak from the gunshot wound.

"One thing I'd like to have you explain, Mr. Shores," said Hulsey. "You plugged me in the shoulder, then yelled 'halt!' Why didn't you command me to stop before firing?"

"Well, it was this way, Hulsey," Asa replied, unsmiling and looking the convict squarely in the eye. "I aimed at the spot where I calculated your heart ought to be, but the light was poor and I had to shoot quick. I naturally supposed you were dead when I commanded you to halt, and, believing you dead, I could see no reason for being in a hurry with the command. Sorry I bungled the job that way, but my intentions were good."

"But," the scowling "lifer" persisted, "you haven't told me yet why you shot before commanding me to halt."

"Oh, that?" Asa drawled with a deprecatory shrug of his massive shoulders. "That is merely a matter of form with me. I very often, after shooting a convict, yell 'halt' some time the next day—or week. Besides, if you had a nice chance to bump me off, you wouldn't say, 'Beware, Mr. Shores, I'm about to kill you.'"

For a half minute convict and keeper gazed into each others eyes.

"I get yuh," Hulsey finally said. "And I guess you're right. I have an idear though that my turn comes next, Mr. Shores; and there'll be no preliminary command or argument."

"Fair enough, Hulsey," Asa replied as he turned away.

AT LAST the big new cell house was completed.

Asa wondered whether he would be left on Old Tower Number Three. It had been decided, he knew, that the old tower would be left on the wall but perhaps not used.

To celebrate the completion of the new building, the warden declared a holiday and issued orders that all the inmates be given the privilege of the yard that day. There was to be wrestling, boxing, foot-racing and other sports.

Asa Shores' sleeping quarters was a

low-ceilinged room on the ground floor in one of the towers of the old cell house. Asa had been warned a number of times that his room was not a safe place to sleep in the day time. Convicts in the yard could enter the room at any time during the day, without being seen by the yard guards or wall guards. Though the one door to the room was thick and heavy, Asa seldom if ever locked it.

Asa had risen in the afternoon, complaining to himself about the noise being made by the convicts in the yard. His peevishness vanished, however, after a cold wash, and he sang as he stood looking out at one of the windows and brushing his hair:

"When I die and am buried deep,
"I'll return at night to take a peep
"At those who hated me.
"I'll ha'nt their homes and spoil their sleep,
"Chill their blood, the skin will creep,
"On those who—"

Asa's song ended there—ended in a horrible gurgle. A "trusty" found him an hour later lying in a pool of blood near the open window.

His throat had been cut by a sharp instrument in the hand of a person unknown.

Hulsey the "lifer" was questioned, of course, but there was absolutely nothing to indicate that it was he who committed the murder.

The guards looked sadly upon all that remained of Asa Shores and said to each other in hushed voices:

"It had to come. Asa was too good a convict guard not to be murdered."

And though the prison stool pigeons kept their ears and eyes opened, though each guard became a detective, the murder of Asa Shores remained a mystery.

Old Tower Number Three was closed and the doors locked. There was no immediate use for it; but the warden was contemplating the advisability of having another guards' entrance gate cut through the wall under the tower. In this case, of course, the tower would be used again.

NIGHT Captain Jesse Dunlap sat alone in the guards lookout, inside the walls, at one o'clock on the morning following the murder Asa Shores. Bill Wilton, the night yard guard, was making his round about the buildings in the yard.

Captain Dunlap lazily watched the brass indicators on the report board before him. The indicator for Tower Number One made a half turn to the left and a small bell on the board rang. The captain lifted the receiver from the telephone at his elbow and received the report, "Tower Number One. Anderson on duty. All O. K."

Dunlap merely grunted a response and replaced the receiver on the hook. Presently the indicator for Tower Number Two turned to the left, the bell tinkled, and Dunlap again took the receiver from the hook.

"Tower Number Two. Briggs on duty. All O. K." came the report over the wire.

Then came New Tower Number Three; next Tower Number Four. From the three outside guard-posts came the reports, and one from the cell house, each guard turning in his post number, his name and the usual "O. K."

All the indicators on the board, except that for Old Tower Number Three, were now turned. Captain Dunlap relaxed in his chair, sighed heavily and lit his pipe. Lazily his eyes wandered back to the indicator board.

The unturned indicator for Old Tower Number Three held his gaze and utter sadness gripped him for a moment Night after night, promptly on the hour, he had seen the indicator for Old Tower Number Three flip jauntily to the left and had heard the tinkle of the little bell on the board. It had always seemed to him that the indicator for Asa Shores' tower turned with more pep than the other indicators, that the bell had tinkled more cheerily, that good old Asa Shores' report carried a note of cheerfulness that lightened the lonesome watches of the night.

Now the old tower was cold, even as poor old Asa was cold; the doors were locked and barred. Never again, thought Dunlap, would be heard Asa Shores' familiar song on the quiet night air. What were the words to that song?

"When I am dead and buried deep,
"I'll return at night to take a peep
"At those who hated—"

Captain Dunlap suddenly sat erect in his chair. The pipe fell from his lips and clattered on the floor, as his lower jaw dropped and his eyes opened wide to stare at the indicator board; for—

The indicator for Old Tower Number Three was moving—moving, not with a quick turn to the left, but in a hesitant, jerky way that caused the root of every hair on Captain Dunlap's head to tingle. Never before had the captain seen an indicator behave like that. In fact, the indicator system was designed and constructed in such a way that, being controlled by electric contacts, the various indicators would snap into position when a push button in each tower was pressed by the guard on duty in that tower.

In short, an indicator, in accordance with all the rules of electricity as applied to the system, must remain stationary or jerk to the left when the button in the tower was pressed. But here was indicator for Old Tower Number Three wavering, trembling to the left, only to fall back repeatedly to a vertical position. Then again, jerkily, hesitantly to the left, as if a vagrant soul strove to brush aside the veil that banished it from the living.

Captain Dunlap sat rigid and watched the uncanny movements of the bright brass indicator. Vague, fleeting, chaotic thoughts of crossed wires, practical jokers, wandering souls tumbled one after another through his brain.

If only the bell would not tinkle! If it did ring? Well, death then, though it had taken away what was mortal of Asa Shores, had not conquered his eternal vigilance and strict attention to duty.

Farther to the left wavered the indicator, hesitatingly, uncertainly, then —*the bell rang!*

A weak, slow ring, it was, that sounded strange and unnatural in the deathlike silence of the dimly lighted lookout.

CAPTAIN DUNLAP was a brave man. He had smilingly faced death a dozen times in Granite River Prison.

But always his danger was known to be from living, breathing men. Abject terror gripped him now; a nameless terror that seemed to freeze the blood in his veins, contract every muscle and nerve of his body, smother his heart.

But even then reasoning struggled for recognition in his mind. What if it were a part of Asa Shores, a part of him that remained on earth to defy death and carry on? Hasn't Asa always been Captain Dunlap's friend? Why should he fear the spirit of a friend?

Dunlap reached forth a trembling hand, took the receiver from the hook and slowly, reluctantly, placed it to his ear. How he wished, hoped, prayed that no voice would come over the wire!

But it did come, preceeded by a faint whispering sound:

"Old t-t-t-tow—" a long pause, then weakly, almost inaudibly, as if the message came from a million miles away—"Old t-t-tower n-n-n— three. S-S-Sho—"

Another pause, a jumble of meaningless words, then a chuckle. God! Asa's familiar chuckle!

"On duty. All O-O—all O—"

A light laugh, a sharp buzzing sound, a sigh, the faint tinkle of a bell, then silence!

Dunlap heard no click of a receiver being replaced on a hook. The line was apparently still open.

Still holding the receiver to his ear, the captain moistened his dry lips with the tip of his tongue. His free hand went involuntarily to his forehead in a vague uncertain gesture and came away damp with perspiration. Must

he answer that ghost call? Must he speak to the *thing* that held the line.

When he at last spoke his voice was husky, a strange voice even to him:

"Who—who did it, Asa? Who—who—if you are dead—if this is you, Asa, tell me—*who did it.*"

Again that queer, unfamiliar buzzing sound. Then, from Old Tower Number three, or from beyond the grave perhaps, came a faint, whispering, uncertain voice:

"He—he—it was . . . "

The voice ended in a gurgle.

Dunlap replaced the receiver on the hook, and as he did so his eyes rested on the indicator board and he gasped sharply; for the indicator for Old Tower Number Three went wavering, trembling back to a vertical position on the time dial!

This unheard-of behavior of the indicator was the deepest mystery of all. The indicators, each controlled independent of the others by push buttons in each tower, were constructed mechanically to turn only from right to left.

The indicator for Old Tower Number Three had *turned back from left to right!*

CAPTAIN DUNLAP made no effort to solve the mystery.

Old Tower Number Three was securely locked and could not be approached except by crossing over the wall from New Tower Number Three on the Southeast corner of the wall, or from Tower Number Two on the Northeast corner of the wall. Dunlap himself had closed and locked the doors and windows of the tower. There was but one key to the tower doors, and that key was in Dunlap's pocket.

Unlike the other towers, Old Tower Number Three could not be entered from the ground outside the wall. It was built solidly of stone from the ground up, and the only entrances were the two doors communicating with the top of the wall on either side of the tower.

Besides, strict orders had been given that no one enter the tower unless ordered there by a shift captain. And, too, in the glare of the arc lights near the wall, it would be impossible for anyone to cross the wall to the tower, without being seen by other wall guards.

Could the mysterious report have come from one of the other wall towers? Impossible for this reason: When the push button in one of the wall towers—say, that in Old Tower Number Three—was pressed by the man on duty there, the indicator on the board in the captain's lookout turned to the left a quarter-turn on the time dial, the small bell on the board rang and all telephone connections with the other wall towers were automatically cut off until the captain had replaced the telephone receiver on the hook after receiving the report from Old Tower Number Three.

Dunlap said nothing to Bill Wilton when the latter returned to the yard lookout, after making his round in the yard. It would be best he reasoned, to say nothing to anybody about the mysterious call. They would only laugh at him if he told them about it. If the indicator had not returned to a vertical position on the time dial he would have some proof on which to base his wild story of the ghost call. But the indicator had, before his own eyes, returned to its former position after the call.

An hour later, at two A.M., Dunlap fearfully watched the indicator for Old Tower Number Three. Reports from all other posts had been received. Then, just once, the indicator trembled uncertainly, made almost a quarter turn to the left and snapped back to a vertical position. At three o'clock it did not move. Nor did it move at four o'clock.

A week passed. Not a tremor disturbed the "ghost tower" indicator.

Then, one morning at one-thirty o'clock, an unearthly, piercing scream in the cell-house awaked half the men in the building and sent the cell-house guard scurrying down to cell twenty-one on the corridor; for it was from this cell that the blood-chilling scream had come.

The bloodless, perspiration-dampened face of Malcolm Hulsey, the "lifer," was pressed against the bars of the cell door when the guard arrived. The convict's

(Continued on page 184)

Here's An Extraordinary Yarn—

The Ghoul *and the* Corpse

By G. A. WELLS

THIS is Chris Bonner's tale, not mine. Please remember that. I positively will not stand sponsor for it. I used to have a deal of faith in Chris Bonner's veracity, but that is a thing of the past. He is a liar; a liar without conscience. I as good as told him so to his face. I wonder what kind of fool he thinks I am!

Attend, now, and you shall hear that remarkable tale he told me. It was, and is, a lie. I shall always think so.

He came marching into my igloo up there at Aurora Bay. That is in Alaska, you know, on the Arctic sea. I had been in the back-country trading for pelts for a New York concern, and due to bad luck I didn't reach the coast until the third day after the last steamer out had gone. And there I was marooned for the winter, without chance of getting out until spring, with a few dozen ignorant Indians for companions. Thank heaven I had plenty of white man's grub in tins!

As I said, here came Chris Bonner marching in on me the same as you would go down the block a few doors to call on a neighbor.

"And where the devil did you drop in from?" I demanded, helping him off with his stiff parka.

"Down there," he answered, jerking an elbow toward the south. "Let's have something to eat, MacNeal. I'm hungry as hell. Look at the pack, will you!"

I had already looked at the pack he had cast off his shoulders to the fur-covered floor of the igloo. It was as lean as a starved hound. I heated a can of beef bouillon and some beans, and made a pot of coffee over the blubber-fat fire that served for both heat and light, and put these and some crackers before my guest. He tore into his meal wolfishly.

"Now a pipe and some tobac, MacNeal," he ordered, pushing the empty dishes aside.

I gave him one of my pipes and my tobacco-pouch. He filled and lighted up. He seemed to relish the smoke; I imagined he hadn't had one for some

time. He sat silent for a while staring into the flickering flame.

"Say, MacNeal," he spoke at length; "what do you know about a theory that says once on a time this old world of ours revolved on its axis in a different plane? I've heard it said the earth tipped up about seventy degrees. What d'you know about it?"

That was a queer thing for Chris Bonner to ask. He was simon-pure prospector and I had never known him to get far away from the subject of mining and prospecting. He had been hunting gold from Panama to the Arctic Circle for the past thirty years.

"No more than you do, probably," I answered his question. "I've heard of that theory, too. I'd say it is any man's guess."

"This theory holds that the North Pole used to be where the Equator is now," he said. "Do you believe that?"

"I don't know anything about it, Chris," I replied. "But I do know that they have found things up this way that are now generally recognized as being peculiarly tropical in nature."

"What, for instance?"

"Palms and ferns, a species of parrot, saber-tooth tigers; and also mastodons, members of the elephant family. All fossils and parts of skeletons, you understand."

"No human beings, MacNeal? Any skeletons or fossils of those up this way?"

"Never heard of it. Prehistoric people are being found in England and France, however."

"Huh," he said.

He pondered, puffing at his pipe, his eyes on the fire. He looked perplexed about something.

"Look here, MacNeal," he said suddenly. "Say a man dies. He's dead, ain't he?"

"No doubt of it," I laughed, wondering.

"Couldn't come to life again, eh?"

"Hardly. Not if he were really dead. I've heard of cases of suspended animation. The heart, apparently, quits beating for one, two or possibly ten minutes. It doesn't in fact, though; it's simply that its beating can't be detected. When a man's heart stops beating he's dead."

Bonner nodded.

"'Suspended animation,'" he muttered, more to himself than to me. "That must be it. That's the only thing that'll explain it; nothing else will. If it could cover a period of ten minutes, why not a period of twenty or even a hundred thousand years—"

"If you'd like to turn in and get some rest, Chris, I'll fix you up," I broke in.

He caught the significance of my tone and grinned.

"You think I'm crazy, eh?" he said. "I'm not. It's a wonder, though, considering what I've seen and what I—here, let me show you something!"

HE THRUST a hand into his lean pack and brought forth an object that at first glance I thought to be a butcher's knife.

He handed it to me and I at once saw that it was not a butcher's knife as I knew such knives. It was a curious sort of knife, and one for which a collector of the antique would have paid good money.

It was a very dark color, almost black; corroded, it seemed to me, as if it had lain for a long time in a damp cellar. It was in one piece, the handle about five inches long and the blade perhaps ten inches. Both edges of the blade were sharp and the end was pointed like a dagger. And it certainly wasn't steel. I scratched one side of the blade with my thumb nail and exposed a creamy yellow under the veneer of black.

"Part of that's blood you scraped away, MacNeal," Bonner said. "Now what's that knife made of?"

I examined the yellow spot closely. The knife was made of ivory. Not the kind of ivory I was acquainted with, however; it was a very much coarser grain than any ivory I had ever seen.

"That came out of a mastodon's tusk, MacNeal," Bonner said.

I looked at him. He was nodding, seriously. He apparently believed what he said, at any rate.

"Nice curio, Chris," I commented,

handing the thing back to him. "Heirloom, no doubt. Picked it up in one of the Indian villages, eh?"

He did not speak at once. He sat puffing, looking at the fire. Once he puckered his brows in a deep frown. I waited.

"I've been prospecting, as usual," he said at length. "Down there around the headquarters of the Tukuvuk. It's an awful place; nobody ever goes there. The Indians tell me the spirits of the dead live there. I can believe it; it's an ideal place for imps and devils. And I was right through the heart of it. I believe I'm the first. No matter how I got there; I came up from the south last summer. You see, I had an idea there was gold in that country.

"The place where I finally settled down was in a little valley on one of the branches of the Tukuvuk between two ranges of hills running from five hundred to maybe three thousand feet high. Messy-looking place, it was; all littered up, as if the Lord had a few sizable chunks of stuff left over and just threw 'em down there to be out of the way.

"But the gold was there; I could almost smell it. I'd been getting some mighty nice color in my pan; that's what made me decide to stay there. I got there about the middle of July, and I spent the rest of the summer sinking holes in the edge of the creek and along the benches above. What I found indicated that there was a mighty rich vein of the yellow metal thereabouts, with one end of it laying in a pocket of the stuff. If I could locate that pocket, I thought, I'd have the United States treasury backed off the map. But I wasn't able to run the pocket down by taking bearings from my holes, because the holes didn't line up in any particular direction.

"What with my interest in trying to get a line on that pocket, I didn't notice that the season was getting late. But I'd brought in enough grub to last the winter through, so that didn't matter. Just the same it was up to me to get some sort of shelter over my head, so I hustled up a one-room shack about twelve by twelve I cut from the timber on the slopes with my hand-ax. Nothing fancy, but tight enough. I put in a fireplace and cut and stacked a lot of wood outside.

"That done, winter was on me; I simply couldn't resist the temptation to have one more try at finding the pocket that spewed the yellow metal all around there. As I said, I got no information from the holes sunk, and it was pure guesswork. I guessed I'd find my pocket on the side of a certain hill, about two hundred feet above creek level. A glacier flowed down the side of that hill through a little gulley, and my idea was that the ice ground away at the pocket and brought the metal down to the creek, and the creek scattered it. This theory was borne out to some extent by the fact that my best showings of color always came from a point a little below the conjunction of the creek and glacier.

"It was snowing the morning I took my pan and shovel and started up the side of the hill, keeping to the edge of the glacier. It wasnt much of a glacier for size; say, about fifteen feet wide. I could see it winding up the side of the hill until it went out of sight through a cleft about a thousand feet up. Fed by a lake up there, probably.

"I had climbed the hill maybe a hundred feet, following the edge of the glacier, when I caught sight of a dark blotch in the edge of the ice. It was about two feet under the surface. I brushed away the film of snow to have a look. The ice was as clear as a crystal, of a blue color. And what d'you think, MacNeal? It was a man's body!"

He paused and gave me a quick glance. He wanted to see how I took that, I presume.

"The body of a man," he went on. "And the queerest-looking man I ever saw in my life. He was lying on his belly and I didn't get a look at the front of him just then, but I knew it was a man all right. He was covered all over with long hair like a—well, like a bear, say. Not a stitch of clothes."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Why, I was that surprised I let my

pan and shovel drop and started at the damn thing with the eyes near popping out of my head. What would anybody do, finding a hair-covered thing like that frozen in a glacier? I won't deny I was a bit scared, MacNeal.

"Well, I stood there staring at the thing for I don't know how long. It didn't occur to me, then, to ask myself how the thing got there. Certainly the idea of fossils or prehistoric men didn't enter my head. I didn't think much about anything; I just stood there gaping.

"You know me, MacNeal; I guess I'm pretty soft-hearted in some respects. I'd stop to bury a dead dog I found in the road. I knew I wouldn't rest easy until I'd cut that thing out of the glacier and given it decent burial. Moreover, I didn't want it where I'd be seeing it when I went to work on that hillside in the spring; and it would surely be there in the spring, because I imagine that glacier didn't move an inch a year.

"So I went back to the shack and got my ax, and with none too good a heart for the job turned to and made the chips fly. It took me about three hours to get the thing out of the glacier. You see, as I came down to it I went slow; I don't care to hack even a dead man.

"Say, MacNeal, can you imagine what it meant to me, digging a corpse out of a glacier down there on the side of a hill in that devil-ridden country? No, you can't, and that's the truth. You'd have to go through it to know. It was hell. I don't want any more of it in mine. Nor what followed, either."

"What was that?" I asked when he deliberated.

"You'll hear," he answered, and went on: "I got the thing out at last, little chunks of ice clinging to it, and dragged it ashore, if a glacier has a shore. It froze me to look at the thing with those little chunks of ice sticking to the long hair. Once, at Dawson, I'd seen a man pulled out of the Yukon, ice clinging to him. That was different, though; at Dawson there was a crowd to sort of buck a man up. I turned the thing over on its back to see what it looked like in front."

"Well?" said I.

"You've seen apes, MacNeal?"

"This thing looked like that?" I countered, beginning to connect up his first queer questions with what he was telling me. "You don't mean it, Chris!"

"I'm telling you," he nodded solemnly. "An ape man, that's what it was. More man than ape, if you ask me. For instance, the face was flatter than an ape's, and the forehead and chin were more pronounced. The nose was flat, but it wasn't an ape's nose. And the hands and feet were like those of a man. Oh, it was a man, all right. The thing that convinced me, I think, was the knife gripped in its hand."

"The knife you have there?" I inquired.

"This very knife," he answered.

"What then, Chris?" I urged him to go on.

"I had a good look at that thing and started for my shack. Yes, MacNeal, I ran, and I'm not ashamed to say so. It scared me. Ugliest thing I ever saw. Eyes wide open, glaring and glinting, and the thick lips parted to show the nastiest set of fangs I ever saw in the mouth of man or beast. Why, I tell you the damned thing looked *alive!* No wonder I scooted. You would have done the same. Anybody would.

"Back in the shack, I sat down on my bunk to think it over. And it was while I sat there trying to puzzle it out that I remembered that theory about the earth tipping over. That gave me a hint of what I had run up against. Of course, I'd heard about fossils and parts of the skeletons of prehistoric men being found. Had I found, not a fossil or part of a skeleton, but the prehistoric man himself? That knocked the wind out of me. If that were the case my name would go down in history and I would be asked to give lectures before scientific societies and such. Consider it, MacNeal.

"I tell you, I couldn't quite grasp the thing. It was incredible. There I was in this year of our Lord, with the intact corpse of a man who had lived God only knows how many centuries ago. That body, understand, could well

be the key to the mystery of the origin of mankind. It might possibly settle the Darwinian theory forever, one way or the other. It was a pretty serious business for me, don't you see?

"Well, I decided to preserve the thing until I could get out and make a report of the find. But how to preserve it? Of course if I had left it in the glacier it would have kept indefinitely, like a side of beef in cold storage. I was afraid to put it back in the hole in the glacier and freeze it in again with water I carried from the creek; the creek water might exert some chemical action that would ruin the thing. And if I let it lay where it was the snow would cover it, form a warm blanket, and probably cause it to decompose, then I'd have nothing left but the skeleton. I wanted to save the thing just as I'd found it; maybe the scientists would find a way to embalm it.

"I finally hit on the plan of keeping it in an ice pack. That would turn the trick until the weather took on the job. It hadn't turned bitter cold yet. I tell you, it was a nasty job keeping that thing iced with chunks I chopped from the glacier, and to make it worse the weather stayed moderate for a couple of weeks. Then, suddenly, the mercury in my little thermometer went down with a rush and it got stinging cold. I carried the thing to the shack and stood it up against the wall outside where it couldn't be covered with snow, and lashed it there.

"Can you imagine me going to sleep in my bunk in the shack every night after that, with that thing standing against the wall outside not two feet away? Of course you can't. It frazzled my nerves, and more than once I was tempted to cut a hole in the ice on the creek and chuck the damn thing in where I'd never see it agin. But no, I had to save it for the scientists and get my name in history; that idea got to be an obsession with me. I knew well enough that if ever I told people the tale I'm telling you now, without some proof of it, I'd get laughed at."

"No doubt of it." I sneered.

"The days went by," he continued, ignoring my sneer, "and more and more that thing outside kept getting on my nerves. The sun went south, and from one day to another I never saw it. The never-ending night was bad enough, but when you add the northern lights and the howling of the wolves you've got a condition that breaks a man if he's not careful. Furthermore, there was that ugly-looking devil outside to think about.

"I was thinking about that thing constantly, and got so I couldn't sleep. If I shut my eyes I'd see it, anyhow, and if I went to sleep I'd have a nightmare over it. Now and then I'd go out and stand there in the starlight or the aurora looking at it. It fascinated me, yet the sight of the thing gave me the creeps. Finally I began taking a club or my rifle along when I went to look at it; got afraid the thing would come alive and try to murder me with that knife.

"And that's the way of things for maybe three months and more. My thoughts all the time on that thing outside.

"Well, that couldn't go on, you know. One morning I woke up with the worst headache a man ever had. I thought my head would split wide open. My blood was like molten iron flowing through my veins. I knew what it was. *Fever.* I had thought and worried about that thing outside until it got me, and I was in for a brain-storm. I was as weak as a cat, but managed to build up a good fire and pack my bunk with all the blankets and furs I had and crawl in. I only hoped I wouldn't freeze to death when the fire went out.

"I no sooner got all set in the bunk than things let go; I went completely off. I can't say positively what happened for a few days after that. Seems like I remember, though, periods when I was semi-rational. I think once I got up to put more wood on the fire. Another time I saw that thing standing in the doorway grinning at me like the devil it was. I shot at it with my rifle and later found a bullet in the door. My shooting couldn't have been a delusion, at any rate. But the door was still fastened against the wolves and

there were no tracks in the snow outside."

Bonner paused to light his pipe, and then went on:

"I don't know exactly how long I was out of my head. I'd wound my watch before I crawled into the bunk the first time, and I half remember I wound it again when I got up to put wood on the fire, and it was pretty well run down. It goes forty hours without winding, yet when my head cleared it had stopped. I must have been off my nut about four days.

"Well, you can lay your bottom dollar I'd had enough of prehistoric men hanging around the shack by that time. Let the scientists be damned; I was determined to get rid of that thing the quickest way possible. The quickest way, I thought, would be to get the corpse warm so it would decompose rapidly, then I'd put it outside where the wolves and ravens would pick the bones clean. The scientists would have to be satisfied with the skeleton.

"So I made a big fire in the fireplace and got the shack good and hot, then went out and brought in the corpse. I got sick at the stomach on that job, but that was the only way. I didn't have the heart to leave the thing outside and build a fire over it out there. I try to respect the dead, even if the corpse is that of a man who had been dead several thousand years and looked more like an animal than a human being.

"I laid the thing on the floor before the fireplace, then sat down on the bunk to wait. I watched it pretty close, because, being dead so long, I thought when it got warm and started to decompose it would go like butter; I didn't want the shack to be all smelled up with the stink of it. Probably half an hour went by, then all of a sudden *I saw the thing quiver—*"

"Your brain-storm returning," I interposed.

"Wait," said Bonner sharply. "It quivered; not much, but enough to notice. That sort of got me, then I reasoned that anything thawing out like that would naturally quiver a little. Maybe another fifteen or twenty minutes passed, then one of the legs moved. Jerked, sort of. It startled me. Remember, there I was down there in those hills alone with that thing. I was pretty susceptible to weird influences, understand. Anyhow, the leg moved, and—"

"It sat up and asked for a drink of water." I could not help putting in. Bonner continued, paying no attention to my sarcasm. He seemed to be talking aloud to himself:

"I watched it like a hawk for some time after that, then as I didn't see it move any more I stepped outside to get some more wood for the fire and to pull a few good breaths of cold air into my lungs. That shack was like the inside of an oven.

"When I went in again I saw that the damned thing *had turned over on its back.*

"Turned over on its back, I say. And there was a change in the eyes, too; they had a half-awake sort of look in them; a more *alive* look, understand. And breathing! Yes, sir, *breathing!* Why the thing didn't see me when I came in and shut the door I don't know, but apparently it didn't. And, believe me or not, the hand that had held the knife was open and the knife was lying on the floor apart from the body.

"Crazy? I tell you *no!* I was as sane as I am now. I tell you I saw these things with my own two eyes; saw them just as plain as I see you now. I see you don't believe me, MacNeal. Oh, well, I don't blame you; I hardly believe it myself sometimes."

He uttered a little laugh.

"But there it was, just as I'm telling you. And I was that gone when I saw that the thing had turned over on its back that I dropped the wood I had in my arm. The crash of it on the floor brought the thing to its feet on the jump. You needn't look at me like that; I tell you it did. I take my oath it did! There it was, crouched like a panther ready for the spring, the eyes of it flashing like fire, its lips pulled back tight across the gums and the yellow fangs showing. Can you see that? No, you can't."

Bonner made an expressive gesture with one hand.

"Remarkable, but the thing hadn't seen me yet. It was looking at the fire; it was half turned toward me so I could see that. Suddenly it screamed in an outlandish gibberish and leaped to the fireplace and tried to gather in an armful of flames. I take it the thing had never seen fire before; didn't know what it was; probably imagined it some kind of wild animal. Naturally the only thing it got out of that play was burned arms and hands, and the long hair sizzled and curled. It leaped back with a snarl, spitting that funny gibberish. Talk, I guess it was; it came from way down in the belly and sounded like pigs grunting.

"I tell you, MacNeal, I was fair dazed. But I had the sense left to try to help myself. My rifle was leaning against the bunk and I made a quick dive for it. Then, apparently, the thing saw me for the first time. The way it glared at me with those glittering eyes was a caution. I didn't stop to argue; I snatched up the rifle, cocked it and made a snap shot. The bullet caught the thing in the left breast and the blood gushed. Of course you don't believe it. But blood, I tell you, gushed from the breast of a thing that had been frozen in a glacier for thousands of years!

"Well, here it came like a cyclone. I didn't have time to shoot again. Smell? That thing smelled like carrion; almost strangled me. Maybe you know how the cage of a wild animal stinks if it ain't cleaned out for a week or two. This thing smelled like that, only worse. I can smell it yet. Lord!"

Bonner wrinkled his nose and shivered.

"But there we were at grips, the thing making those belly noises and smelling like a thousand garbage piles. It had the strength of ten men; I sensed that. It jerked the rifle from me and bent the barrel of it double with a twist of the wrists. The barrel of a thirty-eight caliber Winchester rifle—bent it as easy as you or I would bend a piece of copper wire.

"Then we were at it, fighting like a couple of wild cats all over the shack. I'm no slouch of a man myself, MacNeal, when it comes to a rough-and-tumble; but that thing handled me like a baby. I could see my finish. We threshed about the floor, me fighting like a devil, it fighting like forty devils. We kicked into the fire and out again and scattered live coals all over the place, and the shack took fire.

"I was just about gone when my hand accidentally fell on the handle of the knife the thing had dropped on the floor. I hung on to it and poked away at that thing for all I was worth, driving the blade clean up to the hilt with every punch."

"That knife?" I broke in.

"This knife," answered Bonner. "There's the dried blood on it yet. But I think it was really the bullet that did the work. It must have cut an artery. Anyhow, the blood kept gushing out of the thing's breast; it got on my hands and made 'em slippery. I knew the thing couldn't pour out blood like that and keep going; that's what put the heart in me to keep on fighting. And, as I say, I think it was the bullet that did the work in the long run. A lucky shot, otherwise I wouldn't be here now.

"I felt the thing sagging and going limp in my hands, and its grip began to relax. I saw my chance and put up a knee and broke the grip and kicked it away. It staggered around a moment or two, clutching its breast with its bloody paws, gnashing its fangs and glaring murder at me; then it crashed down to the floor and fell smack into the flames.

"I saw plain enough there was no chance of saving the shack, so I snatched up what I could lay my hands on in the way of food and clothing and blankets, and tore out. I don't remember putting the knife in my pocket, but that's where I found it later. The shack burned down to nothing, and that thing burned with it; probably not a bone of it left. The scientists were out of luck and the mystery of mankind would remain unsolved.

"I didn't stop to investigate, of course; my job was to make tracks. I knew about this village and came on. How I got here I don't know; this is a terrible country to cross afoot in the winter. I'd turned my ten huskies adrift to shift for themselves when I reached the valley where all this happened; I didn't have the grub to keep them going. I had to walk here.

"And that's all, MacNeal. You can say what you please; I know what I saw with my own eyes and you can't change my mind about it. Suspended animation? Yes, for a period covering many centuries. It would be a mighty fine thing if we could picture what happened away back there when this old earth tipped over.

"Perhaps we'd see a man, a man that was half ape, crossing a creek with a knife in his hand on the way to murder an enemy sleeping on the opposite bank. Then suddenly the earth tipped over—climatic conditions in those days were such as to freeze things up in a flash—things are held in the grip of the ice just as the dust and lava held 'em in the days of Pompeii, and—

"Well, who's to say what happened? Anything was possible. We don't know the conditions of those days. Anyhow, here I come thousands of years later and dig a man, with a knife in his hand, out of a glacier. I heat his body in order to decompose the flesh. Instead of decomposing; he comes to life and I have to kill him. He's been hibernating in a glacier for centuries. I don't know what to think about it."

Bonner refilled and lighted his pipe, then looked at me questioningly.

"Chris," I said, "I tell you frankly that I don't believe a word you have said. You tell me you were out of your head for a few days. That accounts for it. You had the jim-jams and imagined all that, then try to spring it on me as actual fact.

He looked hurt. He looked at the knife in his hand steadily for several long moments, then thrust it toward me, his eyes boring into mine.

"Then where in hell," he demanded, "did I get this knife?"

"The Living Nightmare"

By ANTON M. OLIVER

In the April Issue of

WEIRD TALES

Is a Masterpiece of Gooseflesh Fiction

FEAR

By David R. Solomon

THERE were only five words.

They neither affirmed nor denied what had gone before. But they changed the whole trend of the argument.

The men of the engineering gang were lying around the camp-fire, preparatory to going out on the job. It was cool in the shade of the thick trees, with the damp feel of early morning hanging over everything. Further out, over the river, the sun gave promise of better weather later in the day.

Smoking, waiting for the laggards to clean up their plates, the engineering gang—according to invariable man-custom—had begun experiences, jokes, arguments. Over all hung the pungent smell of strong, fresh coffee, and much frying bacon.

Baldy Jenkins, the eighteen-year-old had started it.

"Wish I had a million dollars," he remarked.

Red Flannel Mike gave the ball a roll.

"You do not," he denied stoutly. "Be givin' you a million—and the Lord himself only knows what you'd be a-doing wid it."

"Hell I don't," said Baldy. "Bet I could tell you right now how I'd spend every penny of it."

"Bet you don't," broke in another of the gang. "Fellow never does know what he's goin' to do till it hits him, square between the eyes."

"Offer me a million," insisted Baldy Jenkins.

"Aw, not that way. Take somep'n where two men might act different. You don't know what you'd do. I don't. No man does—no more'n that kid over there does."

His lazy gesture indicated a small, khaki-trousered figure. The eyes of the rest of the gang followed.

At first glance she might have been a lad of ten or eleven years. Closer inspection, however, showed the mop of flaxen hair, bobbed off at the level of her ears, and the tender, little-girl face. She was marching around the camp like an inspector-general of an army, into this, that, everything.

"'Cert she wouldn't," affirmed Red Flannel Mike. "Coulter's kid's just like you or me. She'd have to be up against it to know—an' maybe not then."

"Huh! Even that kid. . . . " Baldy snatched up the gauntlet.

They were off. Hot and royally waged the battle.

The advocates of the unexpected gained ascendancy. Louder and more extravagant grew their claims. No man could predict anything. No man knew what he would do. Put him face to face with any situation, any danger, and he would act differently from the way he thought he would.

It was then that Coulter spoke.

He did not raise his voice. If anything, it was lowered. Hitherto, he had sat, silent, listening to the battle of words, his bandaged left arm swung tightly at his side.

"I don't know about that," was all he said.

Sudden quiet fell. There came a restless stirring, then tacit agreement. These men of rougher employment—

axmen, chainmen, engineers—centered their gaze upon Coulter's bandaged left arm.

They knew what he was thinking about. They, too, had seen. They agreed with him that he could have but one possible reaction to one set of circumstances.

All of them were employees, of one branch or the other, of the Consolidated Lumber Company. Coulter was in the legal department. There had arisen a nice question as to the exact ownership of a certain tract. Rather than take chances with the heavy statutory penalties for cutting trees upon another's land, they had sent a lawyer upon the ground. His work was finished. He was ready—more than ready—to return.

City-bred, city born, Coulter had welcomed the chance to see a Southern swamp. He had read, all his life, of Dixie, the land of the magnolia and cotton, of the mockingbird and the honeysuckle. He had welcomed his mission. He had even brought his daughter, Ruth, along.

That was not at all unnatural, however. Wherever Coulter had gone for the last ten years, there, too, had gone Ruth. They had not been separated longer than a day since the gray dawn that the other Ruth had placed the tiny bundle in his arms and turned her face to the wall.

The child was all that was left of their love save memories. She was Coulter's sole interest in life.

Coming to this camp, Coulter had clad her in khaki, and turned her loose in the open. It had done her good.

The eyes of the stained figures around the camp-fire followed his gaze. They knew something of what he was thinking. They had heard him, in the midst of his pain, setting his teeth, gasp: "Get—Ruth away—where she—can't hear!"

That, from a man whom they had to restrain from killing himself to get freedom from the torture, was enough.

Coulter's ignorance of the South and of the woods had been, perhaps, to blame. He did not know. All that he could remember was that he had been bending over the spring, his left arm resting upon the brink. He had not seen the moccasin until it was too late.

Vividly, even yet, he saw the darkish head and body, the supple, writhing, the swift dart and the flash of pain—and then agony; much agony, deep, soul-biting torture.

THERE was no doctor at the camp. There had been a delay before, stupefied, he thought to let them know he had been bit. And then—more agony; agony piled upon agony.

Not concealing their doubts as to their chances of saving his arm or him, they had slapped the rough torniquet upon his arm, and had twisted down upon the stick until he moaned, unwillingly, in pain. Then they had dipped one of the big hunting knives into boiling water, and had cut his arm at the bite marks—gashing it across, with great, free-handed strokes, then back again at right angles; squeezing the cuts to make him lose the poisoned blood.

Then they had canterized the wound. Sick, half afaint, to Coulter it seemed that they were deliberately thinking up additional tortures. The white-hot iron that seered his flesh, tormenting the agonized ends of nerves that already had borne past the breaking point, was the final, exquisite touch of agony.

Coulter was one of those men who bear pain—even a slight pain—with difficulty. Even the sight of blood made him faint. This was horrible beyond anything he had ever dreamed. The physical racking; the feel of the steel blade cutting through his own flesh and sinew, down to the bone, made him bite his lips till they spurted blood, in the effort to keep from screaming aloud.

He had not know they were through. He thought they were preparing additional crucifixion for him.

Red Flannel Mike had slapped the gun from his hands and made him understand, somehow, that it was all over; that they were through. But they watched him the rest of the night.

That was why, as the argument rose around the morning camp-fire, Coulter was very sure that he knew what he would do under one set of circum-

stances. He knew one experience that nothing on earth could send him through again. All that, and more, was in his tone, as he spoke.

At his words there came a restless stirring around the fire. Those men of the engineering gang had seen something of his experience. They knew what he was thinking. The abrupt ending of their argument showed that they agreed with Coulter.

He saw, and understood; and, seeing, smiled bitterly. They knew only a part of it.

To every man there is his one fear. The bravest man that ever trod the earth had his one especial dread. To some, it is fire; to others, cold steel; others still, the clash of physical contact. But, probe deep enough beneath the skin of any man alive, and you find it.

Snakes were Coulter's fear.

He could not explain it. He did not know why he, a man city-bred and born, had this obsession. It had been with him since he could remember. As a child, once he had gone into a convulsion of fear over some pictures of snakes in a book.

The old women of the family nodded their heads wisely, and muttered things about a fright to his mother before his birth. Coulter did not know. All that he was certain about was that the thought, even, of the writhing, slippery, squirming bodies, made his whole being shudder with revulsion, made tingles of absolute horror go up and down his back.

Yes, the gang agreed with him. Yet they had seen only a part of what he had gone through. They had seen and appreciated only his physical suffering—and that was the least part.

Coulter's nerves were in ragged shreds. He started and jumped at the slightest sound. His experience had intensified a thousandfold his nervous horror of reptiles.

The woods, the swamp, were full of them. He ran upon them constantly. All the time he was longing for his hour of liberation, when he could return to the city and to freedom.

The unexpected flutter of a thrush, as he walked through the woods, would send his heart into his throat and his pulse to pounding in fear. Night after night he woke, chained hand and foot with dread that a snake had crawled up, in the dark, beside him. All the stories he had ever read of their crawling up into camps and getting into the bedding, came to him, lingered with him, tortured him. He was no more asleep before he would awake, bathed in a cold sweat, afraid to move, afraid to lie still.

All that, subconsciously, was in his words, in his manner, in his whole expression, as he said:

"I don't know about that."

THERE came the silence of conviction. Even Red Flannel Mike, most zealous exponent of man's lack of knowledge of himself, was silenced.

"Somebody said something about the kid." Baldy, the eighteen year old, seized his advantage. "I'll bet that even she—"

Baldy stopped abruptly. His whole frame stiffened. His eyes were riveted upon little Ruth. One by one, the rest of the gang turned to follow his gaze. Each followed his example.

Ruth's scream cut the air a moment before Baldy's gasp of horror:

"My God! The kid's *got a moccasin on her!*"

The child was close enough for the group to see clearly. Her head was bent back, straining away from the writhing horror. The sleek head slithered to and fro, darting, threatening, winding here and there about her. She seemed frozen with fear.

Baldy had started forward. He stopped.

"I—get me a gun!" he barked. "Get a gun! *Quick!*"

The reptile drew back its head. There came an interruption:

White to his lips, staggering upon his feet, Coulter came forward. His face was ghastly pale. His unwilling feet buckled under him, threatening, each moment, to give way and pitch him forward upon his face.

Slowly he edged closer. The slender head poised, watchful. Coulter's move-

ments were scarcely discernible. Suddenly his well arm shot out, seizing, snatching at that loathsome body.

There was a quick movement of the snake, far too rapid to be anticipated or avoided. The head drove forward. He felt the white hot flash of pain.

The rest was a haze of horror to him. It was rather as if he were a spectator at something concerning someone else. He did not command his body. He knew only, vaguely, what was happening.

There came the feel of a sleek body in his hands, the lash and writhing against his arms of something that fought to break away; then the grinding of his heel upon a head, and the flinging, against him, in death agony.

Everything faded out, then.

HIS RETURN to consciousness was marked by a hazy lightness of memory.

In the bitten arm he could feel, mounting higher and higher, the numbness that had marked the other experience. His heart, too, seemed to be acting queerly—just as it had done before.

Red Flannel Mike's broad back was bent from him as he mixed at something in a basin. They had carried him to his own tent.

Coulter's holster was hanging from the tent pole. The numbness crept higher in his arm. Soon would begin the cutting of his flesh, the darting flames of pain . . .

He could not go through with that again! He could not bear it. Better far to finish with the gun what Mike had stopped before.

Softly he slid the gun from the holster, and raised it for action. His finger pressed upon the trigger.

The weapon was dashed suddenly from his hand.

"What the hell!" roared Mike. "You fool, what's the matter with you?"

"Give—give me that gun!"

"You're as bad as Baldy Jenkins. Been in the woods all his life—and mistakes a coach whip for a moccasin, just because both of 'em are darkish.

"That wasn't any more moccasin than a polar bear . . . Yes, 'course he struck you. Any snake 'll do that—but it ain't always poison. Your arm ain't even go'ner be sore.

"Never mind about this gun. I'll give it back to you—later on."

You'll Be Thrilled and Mystified
By Hamilton Craigie's New Novelette

The Chain

I.

TROUBLE.

QUARRIER entered the taxi with an uneasy sense of crisis.

He was not imaginative; his digestion was excellent; even at forty, an age when most men nowadays have begun to feel the strain of fierce business competition, Quarrier was almost the man that he had been ten years in the past.

Nerves and Quarrier were strangers; he smoked his after-dinner cigar in a rigorous self-denial that made it his sole dissipation; he was in bed and asleep when other men were comfortably faring forth in search of such diversion as the metropolis had to offer.

But the face of that taxi-driver—he had seen it somewhere before. It was a dark, Italian face, with high cheekbones, and a straight, cruel mouth, like a wedge, between lean cheeks scarred and scabbed with late-healed cicatrices and pocked blue with powder burns.

Not an inviting face. And the taxi was old. Glancing at the cushions, as they had roared past an arc-light at the street corner, Quarrier had thought to see the dingy leather sown thick with stains, broad patches, as if—as if . . .

But pshaw! As he told himself, he was getting fanciful; perhaps his liver, at last, had played him false. A migraine, doubtless—he'd have a look in on old Peterby in the morning. Peterby was a good, plain old-fashioned practitioner—no nonsense about *him* . . .

He had gone to the offices of the Intervale Steel Company on a mission, an important one. As a matter of fact, it was vital—almost a matter of life and death. But he smiled grimly now in the dark recesses of the cab as he reflected that, as it chanced, his last-minute decision had left those documents where they would be beyond the reach of—Hubert Marston, for instance.

He had nothing on his person of any special value; he would be poor picking, indeed, if, as it chanced, that taxi driver with the face of a bravo might, behind the sinister mask that was his face, be the thug he seemed, hired, perhaps, by the Panther of Peacock Alley.

An extravagant appellation, doubtless, but that was Marston: Suave, sinister, debonair—the social *routovrier* equally with the manipulator. He had acquired the name naturally enough, for most of his operations were carried on in the hotels and clubs.

He had an office hard by the "Alley" and it was from its ornate splendor that he issued, on occasion, gardenia in buttonhole, cane hooked over his arm, dark face with its inscrutable smile flashing upon the habitués with what meaning only he could say. And he did not choose to tell.

And Marston had wanted those documents; they spelled the difference to him between durance and liberty—aye, between life and death . . .

For Hubert Marston had made the one slip that, soon or late, the most careful criminal makes: He had, yielding on a sudden to his one rare impulse of hate, commissioned the murder of a man who stood in his way, and—he had paid for it, as he had thought, in good crisp treasury notes, honest as the day, certainly! But the payment had been made at second—or third-hand—that was Marston's way. And for once it had betrayed him.

For those documents—as he had found out, too late—were counterfeit treasury notes. The go-between had seen to that, paying the hired killer with them, and pocketing the genuine. And Quarrier, himself the watch-dog of those interests that Marston would have despoiled, (he had been retained by them for some time now as their private investigator) had found, first, the disgruntled bravo himself, obtained the spurious notes, together with the man's confession, traced them backward to the go-between — and now, hard upon the arch-criminal's heels, he waited only for the morning, and that which would follow.

"THE INCUBUS"
By Hamilton Craigie
In the Next Issue of
WEIRD TALES
Is an Extraordinary Yarn of Frightful Adventure in an Underground Cavern
DON'T MISS IT!

Quarrier had given the driver a number in the West Eighties, but now, glancing from the window, his eyes narrowed with a sudden, swift concern.

"The devil!" he ejaculated, under his breath. "Now, if I thought—"

But the sentence was never completed. They were in a narrow, unfamiliar street; a street silent, tenantless, as it seemed, save for dark doorways, and here and there a furtive, drifting shadow-shape—the tall fronts of warehouses, with blind eyes to the night, silent, grim.

The echoing roar of the engine beat in a swift clamor against those iron walls—and suddenly, with a sort of *click*, he remembered where it was he had seen that lupine countenance—the dark face of the driver separated from him by the width of a single pane of glass.

It had been behind glass that he had seen it. A month or so previous, at the invitation of his friend, Gregory Vinson, captain of detectives (with whom he had formerly been associated, prior to his present connection), he had visited headquarters; and it had been there, in the gallery which is given over to rogues, that he had marked that face, its features, even among the many crooks, thugs, strong-arm men, yeggs, hoisters, pennyweighters, housemen, and scratchers. And now he remembered it when it was too late!

His right hand falling upon the butt of a blunt-nosed automatic, with which he was never without, with his left he jerked strongly at the handle of the door. But the door was locked; he could not open it.

Quarrier had been in a tight place more than once; danger he was not unacquainted with; it had been with him in broad daylight, in darkness, grinning at his elbow with dirk or pistol in the highways and byways of Criminopolis. He was a fighter—or he would not have won to the possession of those documents—the documents so greatly desired by Hubert Marston—the evidence of the one false step made by the Master of Chicane, the one slip that was to put him, ere the setting of another sun, where he would be safe.

Now Quarrier, his mouth a grim line, was reaching with the butt of his automatic to break that glass when, with a grinding of brakes the taxi whirled suddenly to a groaning halt.

The door swung open—to the windy

night without, and the glimmer of a dark face at the curb.

"Here you are, sir," Quarrier heard the voice, with, he was certain, a mocking quality in the quasi-deferential cadence. But he could see merely the face, behind it a black well of darkness, velvet black, save for the dim loom of a lofty building just across.

Quarrier did not know how many there might be, lurking there in the blackness, nor did he greatly care. The locked door; the face of the man at the wheel; the unfamiliar street—shanghaied by a land pirate, at the very least! There could be no doubt of it.

But it was no time for hesitation. If he were in the wrong, and it was all a mistake—well, he could afford to pay. But—the face of Marston arose before him, suave, sinister, smiling . . . . What was it the man had said, on the occasion of their last meeting at the Intervale offices:

"Possession, my dear Quarrier—possession is ten points of the lawless. Remember that!"

Quarrier remembered, and with the remembrance came a swift, sudden anger. But it was an anger that was controlled, as a flame is controlled—though it was none the less deadly.

"Here you are, sir," repeated the voice, and now there was in it a something more than mockery. There was an edge, a rasp; almost it sounded like a command, an order.

Quarrier grinned then—a mere facial contraction of the lips. Then, muscle and mind and body, in one furious projectile, he launched himself outward through the doorway in a diving tackle.

The white face with its sneering grin was blotted out; there came the *spank* of a clean-cut blow; a turgid oath. Quarrier, rising from his knees, surveyed the limp figure on the cobbles with a twisted smile; then he turned, peering under his hand down a long tunnel of gloom, where, at the far end, a light showed, like a will-o-the-wisp beckoning him on.

He could not tell where he was. Somewhere in the Forties, he judged—Hell's Kitchen, probably—although there was a curious lack of the life and movement boiling to full tide in that grim neighborhood of battle, murder, and sudden death.

But as his eyes became accustomed to the stifling dark he found the reason. It was a street of warehouses, public stores; and further on, as he looked, like a ribbon of pale flame against the violet sky, he saw the river.

He bent his steps away from it, walking carefully, picking his way on the uneven flagging. Twice, as he went forward, it seemed to him that he was watched—that eyes gazed at him out of the blackness; and twice he turned his head, swiftly to face the silence and the emptiness of the long, lonely way.

And it seemed, too, that as he went, the whispering echo of his hasty steps went on before him, and behind; he fell to counting them—and suddenly he knew. They were before him—and behind. He was in a trap.

There came a leaping, thunderous rush at his back, and a voice, screaming between the high walls:

"There he is! Now—go get 'im!"

And it was then that Quarrier, reaching for his pistol, discovered that it was gone; lost, doubtless, in that encounter with the taxi-driver. But he braced, spreading his arms wide as a grizzly meets the onslaught of wolves. But the wolves were many, and they came on now, a ravening pack; one, before the rest, looming as a black blot against the starshine, lunged forward with a growling oath.

The rest were yet some little distance away. Quarrier saw the man, or, rather, he sensed the nearness of that leaning shadow, spread-eagled like a bat against the dimness . . . Then there came the sudden impact of fist on flesh—a straining heave—and Quarrier, diving under the hurtling figure, straightened, and hurled him outward and away.

The flying figure struck among the rest, head on, to a growling chorus of oaths, imprecations. But still they came on, thrusting, lunging; a gun crashed almost in Quarrier's face . . . There came a voice:

"No shooting, you fool! Th' Big Gun says—"

The rest was lost as the pistol clattered to the cobbles. The center of a whirling tangle of fist and foot, to Quarrier it seemed that he fought in a nightmare that would have no end. He had gone to one knee under the impact of a swinging blow, when, from the far distance, there sounded the rolling rattle of a night-stick, with the clangor of the patrol.

Something gripped his ankle—something at once soft and hard. He lunged, full length, as a football player at the last desperate urge of his spent strength. Then he was on his feet, running, sidestepping, circling with the skill and desperate effort of a plunging half-back, stiff-arming the opposition to right and left.

Just ahead, the black maw of an alley, a deeper blot of blackness, loomed. In its heart, like a witch-fire, there swam upward a nebulous, faint glow as from the pit; out of the tail of his eye he saw it: The dim loom of a house, and an open door.

He reached the turn—and a figure uprose before him, even in that darkness brutish, broad, thewed like a grizzly. The great arm rose, once; it fell, like the hammer of Thor.

Quarrier lurched, stiffened, buckling inward at the knees in a loose-jointed, slumping fall.

II.

Hangman's Hold.

QUARRIER came to himself, all his faculties at full tide.

It was smothering dark—a darkness not merely of the night but of a prison-house, silent, musty with the stale odor of decay and death. Near at hand, after a moment, he heard a slow, ceaseless dripping, like the beating of a heart, or the slow drip-drip of a life that was running out, drop by single drop.

The fancy seemed logical enough; there seemed nothing of the fantastic in it; Quarrier waited, there in the smothering dark, for the quick knife-thrust that would mean the end—or the deadening impact of the slung-shot.

But, unimaginative as he was, like a man who has but lately undergone the surgeon's scalpel he feared to move, to feel, even while he assured himself that he was unhurt save for the throbbing in his temples, and the very bruises that he felt upon him, but would not touch.

But there was something else. After a little his hesitant, exploring fingers found it. The length of line bent in a sort of running bowline about his shoulders and arms. And behind him, from a staple in the wall, it hung, sliding like a snake in the thick darkness.

He moved his head, slowly, carefully, like a man testing himself for an invisible hurt. And then—

"Ha!" he breathed, deep in his throat, the shadow of a cry. For, moving an inch further to the right, it would have been a noose, tightening as he moved, strangling him there, choking him out of sound and sense.

Brave as he was, Quarrier shivered, his shoulders twitching with the thought. And it was not cold. Moving with an infinite caution, he ran his exploring fingers along the hempen strands.

Whoever had devised that noose had been a sailor. And only a sailor could undo it.

And there in the dark, trussed as he was, at the mercy of what other peril he knew not. Quarrier permitted himself the ghost of a grin. His hand went up, slowly, carefully, the fingers busy with the rope; there came a tug, and, coiling at his feet like a snake, the noose slid slithering along the stones.

Quarrier was not a praying man, in the ordinary sense, but now he sent heavenward a silent aspiration of gratitude for the impulse which, years previous, had prompted his signing on as a foremast hand in the China seas. And the long hours in the doldrums, below the line, had, as it proved, been anything but wasted.

Now, easing his cramped muscles in a preliminary stretching, he rose gingerly to his feet, moving with the stealth and caution of an Indian. He

was free of that constricting rope, but as he moved forward, groping, just ahead there came to him a sudden murmur of voices, low, like the growling of savage beasts. There was that sort of note in it: A fierce, avid mutter, and presently, as he advanced, he made out here and there a word.

"Th' Big Gun . . . You better watch your step . . . Mar—"

Quarrier found himself in a sort of corridor, at the far end of which proceeded the voices. It had all been done in the dark, so to speak. The taxi, that driver with the face familiar and yet unfamiliar, the attack, and now this. But time pressed. Why they had not murdered him out of hand he did not pause to consider; he knew only that Marston—and he was certain that it was Marston's hand that had been in it—would, with a clear field, be at the hiding-place of those documents. Even now, doubtless, he was there.

Quarrier felt mechanically for his pistol; and then his hand dropped hopelessly as he remembered that he was weaponless.

He listened tensely, holding his breath, as the voices receded—or, rather, one of them; he could hear the other following the departing man with his complaints.

Evidently they had left a guard of two. One of them was going; the other left behind, and not especially delighted with his job.

An abrupt turn of the long hallway brought this man suddenly into plain view.

Quarrier blinked in the glare from the single incandescent, flattening himself against the wall; then, with a panther-ish space, he had covered the intervening space in three lunging strides.

The man, a broad fellow with a seamed, lead-colored countenance, turned his head; his mouth opened, his hand going to his pocket with a lightning stab of the blunt, hairy fingers.

But Quarrier had wasted no time. Even as the giant reached for his gun Quarrier's fist swung in a short arc, and there was power in it. The blow, traveling a scant six inches, crashed full on the point; the thickset man, his eyes glazing, swayed, slipped, fell in an aimless huddle.

"Well—a knockout!" panted Quarrier, reaching for the pistol.

Marston was the "Big Gun", of course. Quarrier had never doubted it; but hitherto the President of Intervale Steel had conducted his brokerage business, on the surface at any rate, without resort to open violence. And Intervale Steel—You knew really nothing about it until you took a flyer in it; then, as it might chance, you knew enough and more than enough.

Quarrier, glancing at the unconscious man and pocketing the pistol, departed without more ado; proceeding along the hall, he found, with no further adventure, a narrow door, and the pale stars, winking at him from, he judged, a midnight horizon.

But a glance at his watch told him that it was but nine-thirty; there was yet time to get to the hiding-place of those documents ahead of Marston, if, as he was now convinced, it had been Marston's thugs who had ambushed him.

Plunging along the shadowy alley, after five minutes' walk, made at a racing gait, he found a main-traveled avenue and an owl taxi, whose driver, leaning outward, crooked a finger in invitation to this obvious fare, appearing out of the dark.

Quarrier did not hesitate. The fellow might be a gunman or worse; he must take his chance of that.

"Twenty-three Jones!" he called crisply, with the words diving into the cab's interior; then, his head out of the window, as the taxi turned outward from the curb:

"And drive as if all hell were after you!"

III.

The Shape Invisible.

QUARRIER reached his destination without incident, but as he went up the winding stairway of the office building to his private sanctum he was oppressed by an uneasy sense that all

was not as it should be. Those elevators —they were seldom out of order. Perhaps. . . .

But, panting a little from his climb, he found his door, and the door of his private office.

For just a split second he hesitated; then, unlocking the door, he flung it wide and went in.

And then, for the third time that evening, he had another shock: for, almost from the moment of his entry into that sound-proof chamber, he knew that he was not alone.

For a moment, there in the blaze from the electrolier, lighted by the opening of the door, he stood rigid, listening, holding his breath; crouched, bent forward like a sprinter upon his mark.

Quarrier was a big man, and well muscled; in his day he had been an amateur boxer of repute. For a big man, he was quick, well-poised, supple and controlled.

A brain of ice and nerves of steel—that was Quarrier. And at that moment he stood in need of them.

He had heard nothing, felt nothing, seen nobody—and yet he knew, beyond any possibility of doubt, that someone or *something* was with him there in that sound-proof chamber, thirty stories above the street. And the knowledge—as certain as the fact that he, Quarrier, as yet lived and breathed—the knowledge that he was not alone was not reasurring. It was fantastic, it was incredible—but it was *true!*

Everything in that private office was in plain sight; shelter there was none for any possible intruder; and yet, by the very positive evidence of his eyes he knew, and his pulses quickened at the thought, that he was not alone.

It had been Quarrier's fancy to rent the small suite on the top floor of the out-of-the-way office building. He liked the view; the rooms were remote; they suited his purpose; they were private. Anything could happen here, and no one be the wiser: the crash of a heavy .45, for instance, would not penetrate an inch outward beyond those sound-proof walls. And a cry, a shout would be lost there just as a stone is lost, dropped downward into a deep well of silence —and of oblivion.

Now, if Quarrier's man, Harrison, a soft-footed, super-efficient body-servant, had not kept on his hat; or if, say, he had not had a particularly abundant shock of hair, added to the fact that although an excellent servant, he was somewhat deaf; and if, too, he had not, for once, walked and worked in deviousness—this chronicle would have had a very different ending—for Quarrier, at any rate.

His hand in the pocket of his coat, the fingers curled about the butt of the automatic that he had taken from the guard back there in the cellar, Quarrier, frowning, surveyed the room in a slow, searching appraisal. Those documents —he had to make certain of them.

From left to right, as his gaze went round the chamber, he saw a book-case, a full-length canvas, done in oils, the double windows, a door, locked with a huge, old-fashioned key, leading into a lumber-room just beyond, a small wall safe, his desk—which completed the circle.

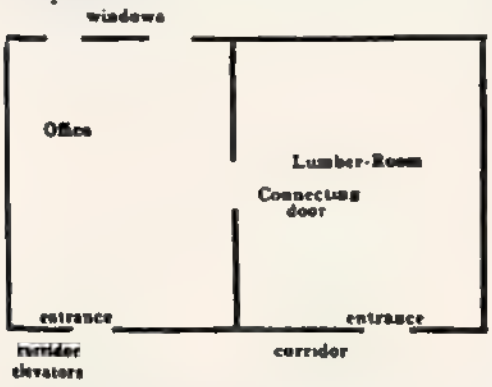
The room was in itself a safe. It was like a fort: The windows were protected by sheet-steel aprons similar to the burglar-guards used by bank tellers; the main entrance door, through which Quarrier had entered, and which opened upon the corridor and the elevators, was of steel, with a patent spring combination lock; the other door, leading to the lumber-room, was also of steel, locked, however, with a huge, old-fashioned key, but this latter door had never been in use since Quarrier's occupancy.

Nothing short of an acetylene blow-pipe could have penetrated the walls, the ceiling, the floor, but they were smooth, unmarred by scratch or tell-tale stain.

Now, to understand events as they occurred:

Quarrier was in his private sanctum, his office; it adjoined the lumber-room

at the right. And a simple diagram may serve perhaps better than a page of explanation:



. . . .

The electrolier, blazing from its four nitro lamps, illumined every nook and cranny of that office; shed its blazing effulgence upon Quarrier, standing like a graven image before that wall safe. And as he stood there, for the first time in his well-ordered existence a prey to fear, a face rose out of his consciousness; he heard again the voice of Marston, President of Intervale Steel:

"You have them, my dear Quarrier; keep them—safe."

Quarrier had never liked Marston; the man was elusive, like an eel; you never saw his hand: it was impossible to guess what moved behind the mask-like marble of his face, expressionless always, cold, contained.

But Quarrier had the "documents," or, rather, they were there, in that wall safe, in itself a small fort of chrome-nickel steel and manganese against which no mere "can-opener" could have prevailed—no torch, even.

Now, as he operated the combination, he was abruptly sensible of a curious sensation of strain; a shock; the short hairs at the back of his neck prickled suddenly as if at the touch of an invisible, icy finger. And for a moment he could have sworn to a Presence just behind him—a something in ambush grinning at his back—a danger, a real and daunting peril, the greater that it was unmeasured and unknown.

But with his fingers upon that dial, Quarrier half turned as if to depart. He was getting jumpy, his nerves out of hand—too much coffee and too many strong cigars, perhaps. That was it. That kidnapping; it might, after all, have had nothing to with Marston. The documents were safe—they simply had to be. Unless Marston had been there, and gone; but he would scarcely have had time.

Perhaps, too, Quarrier might have obeyed the impulsion of that turning movement, and in that case, also, this story would never have been written. Quarrier might have done this, but for the moment, practical and sanely balanced as he was, for a split second he had the fancy that if he turned his head he would see—something that was not good, that was not—well—normal.

It was instinctive, elemental, rather than rational, and, getting himself in hand, he would, doubtless, have turned abruptly, leaving the room, if, at that moment, out of the tail of his eye, he had not seen the inescapable evidence of a presence other than his own.

IV.

The Silent Witness.

QUARRIER was a large man, and hard-muscled, a dangerous adversary in a rough-and-tumble, a "good man with his hands," as we have seen; young, and a quick thinker.

In the half of a second it came to him that Marston might have delegated his authority (at second- or third-hand, certainly) to some peterman, some yegg, say, to obtain possession of those documents. But the fellow would have to be a boxman par excellence; that strong-box was the last word in safes, and, Quarrier was certain, the *final* one.

No ordinary house-man could hope to break into it, and the marauder would have to depend upon a finger sandpapered to the quick, hearing microscopically sensitive, to catch, through that barrier of steel and bronze, the whispering fall of those super-tumblers.

And abruptly following this suggestion, a second and a more daunting thought obtruded: Suppose—just suppose, that their design held no inten-

tion of an assault upon the safe; suppose that their plan, the purpose of that nameless, invisible Presence, had included, in the first place, him—Quarrier? In case, after all, he had managed to escape the trap back there in the cellar? Why—they would use him; that was it! They would force him to open the safe. The thing was simple; there was about it, even, a suggestion of sardonic humor, but it was a humor that did not appeal to Quarrier.

Upon the instant he swung round, crouching, his hand reaching for his pocket in a lightning stab, and coming up, level, holding the short-barrelled automatic.

Then his mouth twisted in a mirthless grin as his straining gaze beheld the square room empty under the lights.

A moment he stood, his keen, strong, thoughtful face etched deep with new lines of worry, ears strained against the singing silence, eyes turning from door to door, and from wall to window, a pulse in his temple throbbing jerkily to his hard-held breath. He began the circuit of the room. Walking on tiptoe, he approached the door by which he had entered, thrust into its socket the great bolt. The bolt seemed really unnecessary; the lock in itself, a spring-latch affair, was devised so that it held the stronger for pressure from without.

The *snick* of steel against steel rang startlingly loud in the speaking stillness; for a moment Quarrier had a curious fancy, a premonition almost, that it was a wasted precaution—that, in effect, he was locking and double locking that door upon an empty room—an empty strong-box. Pistol in hand, however, and starting from the door, he began his round.

The book-case he passed with a cursory examination; nothing there. Next the painting; a portrait of his great-uncle; it held him for a moment; those eyes had always held him; they were "following" eyes; and now for a moment it seemed to Quarrier that they held a warning, a message, a command. But he passed on. . .

A heavy leather settle was next in order. With a sheepish grimace he stooped, peering under it, straightened, going on to the double windows. That settle had been innocent of guile, but as to the windows—he paused an interval while he thumbed the patent steel catches. These were shut tight, the windows black, glimmering squares against the windy night without.

Throwing off the locks, one after the other, he pushed up the first window, released the steel outer apron, and then, in the very act of leaning outward into the black well beneath, he drew back, with a quick, darting glance over his shoulder as his spine prickled at a sudden, daunting thought.

What was that?

For a heartbeat at his back he thought to hear a rustle, a movement, like the shuffle of a swift, stealthy footfall, on the heavy pile of the Kermanshah rug.

But once more there was nothing—no one.

It was thirty stories to the street beneath, and as he leaned there in the window his imagination upon the instant had swayed out down to the dreadful peril of the sheer, sickening fall.

How simple it would have been for someone behind him—how easy. . .

He shivered, the sweat beading his forehead in a fine mist of fear. A hand on his ankle—a quick heave—and then a formless blur against the night—the plunge—into nothingness. . .

Turning to the right, he surveyed the heavy door leading to the lumber-room. He tried the great key, rattling the knob. The door was locked; it was heavy, solid, substantial. A quick frown wrinkled his forehead.

"Absurd!" he muttered, but there was an odd lack of conviction in the word. "Impossible!" he said again. "There's nobody in the room except myself; there *couldn't* be."

But even as he spoke he knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that someone or something *had* occupied that room but a matter of seconds prior to his entry, and if he, or whatever it was, was not there now, where was this invisible presence?

The presence in the room of another than himself was a physical impossi-

bility, unless, indeed, there was, after all, a fourth dimension, into which as a man passes from sunlight into shadow, the intruder had stepped, perhaps now regarding him sardonically from that invisible plane: A living ghost!

Absurd! And yet, there was that other fact—he had seen it: *the silent, the voiceless, yet moving witness—the positive and irrefutable proof of a presence other than his own.*

THERE, in a locked, bolted, impregnable chamber, unmarked by the least sign of entry— a main door which did not have a key, responding only to a combination known only to himself—a secondary door most obviously locked, and from the inside; windows of thick glass, triple locked with the latest in patent catches—someone or something had entered, passing, as it seemed, through bolts and bars, through walls, through steel and stone and concrete, like a djinn, or a wraith—*through the keyhole?*

Matter-of-fact as he was, hard-headed and practical, Quarrier was aware for an instant of a flicker of almost superstitious fear. But—rot! In all the space confined by those four walls and ceiling and floor there was not room for concealment even for a—cat, for instance—for nothing human, at any rate. It was beyond him, even as the Thing that had entered was *beyond him, though at hand.*

Quarrier did not believe in the supernatural with his mind; but, brave as he was by nature and training, in that moment he knew fear. But he preferred, with his intelligence, to credit Marston with it; Marston, so far as morals were considered, might have been almost anything: you saw it in his curious eyes, with their pale irises, the flat, dead color of his skin, like the belly of a snake; in the grim, traplike mouth. Quarrier had never deceived himself as to the President of Intervale Steel. The thing was fantastic, unreal—and yet. It might easily be a trap, and worse. Peril, the more subtile because unknown, was all about him; he felt it, like an emanation. What was it that the psychological sharps would call it? An aura, as of some invisible and deadly presence, seeing, although unseen.

V.

Through The Keyhole.

THE ROOM, or office, as has been written, was impregnable to any but an assault in force, the doors invincible save by the shattering crash of a high explosive, the windows almost equally so.

Quarrier's man, Harrison, even, would be unable to enter the room in his employer's absence; so that, knowing the combination of the safe, he could take nothing from it, or bring anything into it. He left, in the rare intervals that Quarrier suffered his ministrations, always with his master, returning likewise, if he returned at all, in Quarrier's company.

The recluse had hedged himself about with care. Marston, with his keen, devising brain, would face a pretty problem in the recovery of those documents.

But it was when, on an abrupt inspiration, Quarrier removed the telephone receiver from its hook, that he became certain that it was a trap.

"Give me Schuyler 9000," he had whispered, his voice hoarse in the blanketing silence. But even with the words he knew that the line was dead, yet it was characteristic of Quarrier that, once satisfied that this was so, he resumed his inventory of the office where he had left off.

He had completed the circuit of the chamber with the exception of the wall safe and the small, flat-topped writing-desk by the door. From his position he could see the desk quite easily; there was nothing and nobody either on or under it. And now, before he twirled the combination, he laid his hand upon the doors, pulling at the handles in a perfunctory testing. And then—

He recoiled, stumbling backward, as the doors swung wide with a jarring *clang*. Fingers trembling, he jerked forward a drawer—put in his hand. He

withdrew it—empty. Confronted with the incredible truth—the thing which he had feared and yet had not believed—he stood, stunned. *For the documents had vanished!*

Even in the midst of his excitement and dismay, Quarrier permitted himself the ghost of a faint, wintry grin. But a few hours before he had himself bestowed those papers in their particular resting-place; and, observing a precaution to make assurance doubly sure, he had stationed a guard at the street level, men whom he could trust. For, in the morning he had meant to transfer those documents, to that repository in the West Eighties from which Marston would never be able to retrieve them, for with their receipt would come the final quietus of the President of Intervale Steel. And that was why Quarrier had called that number, which had not answered.

Now the documents were gone and Marston was safe. But there remained a final thin thread of hope, and it was this:

The building, a new one, stood alone; Quarrier owned it; his enemeies had in some obscure fashion obtained that which they sought. And—this being so—they were in the building.

Quarrier's orders to that guard had not included the stoppage or detention of any seeking ingress. On entering, he had been informed merely that perhaps half a dozen, all told, had possibly preceded him. They had trapped him—perhaps they might even succeed in expunging him from the record together with the evidence, but they—Marston and the rest—some or all of them were in the building; they *had* to be.

He grinned again, a swift, tigerish grin, as he considered the trifling clue which had betrayed them. But for that he would never have discovered the looting of the safe.

And it was then, as he stood, turned a little from the safe and facing the heavy door giving on the lumber room, that he straightened, tense, bending to the keyhole.

The door was sound-proof, as were the walls, but abruptly, as a sound heard in dreams, he had heard it: At the keyhole, a sound, or the shadow of a sound, faint and thin, but unmistakable, like the beating of a heart.

And that sound had gone on, faint and thin, as though muffled through layers of cotton wool, persistent, regular—the faint, scarce-audible ticking of a watch.

For a moment, even while he considered and dismissed the thought that they might have planted a time-bomb against that door, Quarrier hesitated. And then, abruptly, he knew: They were in the lumber-room; he had surprised them; doubtless they waited, hidden, for his exit. He had been too quick for them; they had not counted on his escape from that cellar, and if that were so, he, Quarrier, would have something to say as to their getaway.

Silent, his automatic ready, he had opened the door into the corridor with a slow, stealthy caution. Then he was in the corridor, searching the thick-piled shadows, where, at the far end, a light hung between floor and ceiling like a star. A silence held, thick, heavy, mournful, daunting, as he began his advance—a silence burdened with a tide of threat, sinister, whispering, alive.

Just ahead of him was the first of the great batteries of elevators. A pressure upon the call-bell, and in a moment he would have with him men upon whom he could rely, men who would execute his least order without question. And then, remembering, he desisted.

For he found it easy to believe that the same agency which had silenced his telephone might have cut him off here also from communication, but his finger, reaching for the signal, jerked backward, as, out of the corner of his eye, he beheld a lance of light spring suddenly from the crusted transom of the lumber-room door.

Were they coming out?

"Ha!" he breathed, deep in his throat,

He did not pause to consider how many of them there might be, or that his faithful guardians of the gate,

thirty stories below, were probably silenced by the same sinister hand.

Silently, his gun held rigid as a rock, he approached the lumber-room door; then, a step away, he paused, with a sharp intake of his breath.

Here, six paces at his left, a narrow corridor led to a fire-alarm box and a window directly overlooking the main entrance and the street. Quarrier, back to the wall, thrust up a groping hand to where, just above his head, a light cluster hung. Three of the bulbs he unscrewed; then, going to the window, opened it, leaned outward, and, with intervals between, dropped them downward into the dark.

Then, pistol in hand, his feet silent upon the concrete flooring of the corridor, he approached the lumber-room door.

On hands and knees, he listened a moment at the keyhole; then, still on his knees, his fingers, reaching, turned the knob, slowly, with an infinite caution, in his face new creases, grim lines. His face bitter, bleak, mouth hard, he straightened, got to his feet, thrust inward the heavy door with one lightning movement; stepped into the lumber-room, his gun, swung in a short arc, covering the two who faced him across the intervening space.

"Those documents, Marston," he commanded bruskly, "I can — use them."

His gaze, for a fleeting instant, turned to the other man, who. hands clenched at his sides, his eyes wide with sudden terror and unbelief, stared dumbly at the apparition in the doorway.

But Marston, his face gray, his hand hidden in his pocket, shrugged, sneered wryly, his hand thrust out and upward with the speed of light.

But, for the difference between time and eternity, he was not quick enough. There came a double report, roaring almost as one: Marston's sneer blurred to a stiff, frozen grimace; he swayed, leaning forward, his face abruptly blank; then, in a slumping fall, he crashed downward to the floor.

Quarrier stooped, swept up the papers where they had fallen from the dead man's pocket; then he turned curtly upon his body-servant.

"You may go, Harrison," he said, as if dismissing the man casually at the end of his day's service.

But if Harrison felt any gratitude for the implied reprieve, he turned now to Quarrier with an eager gesture, his speech broken, agonized:

"He—you must listen, sir—Mr. Quarrier," he begged. "He—Mr. Marston—he knew me when—he knew about . . ."

His voice broke, faltered.

"Well—?" asked Quarrier, coldly, his face expressionless.

"Mr. Marston," continued the man—"he knew—my record—I was afraid to tell you, sir. He—he found out, somehow, that I'd—been—done time, sir . . . He scared me, I'll admit—he threatened me—threatened to tell you . . . You didn't know, of course . . ."

"Yes—I *knew*," explained Quarrier, simply, and at the expression in his master's face the valet's own glowed suddenly as if lighted from within.

"You—*knew*—" he murmured.

VI.

Chain of Circumstance

"BUT there is one thing you can tell me," Quarrier was saying. "You had the combination of the safe, of course; we'll say nothing more about that—but—how did you get in?"

Harrison bent his head.

"Well, sir," he explained, after a moment, "it was simple, but I'd never have thought of it but for—him." He pointed to the silent figure on the floor.

"Well—there are just three doors, sir, as you know," he resumed. "The entrance door of your office, with the combination lock; the entrance door of the lumber-room here, both giving on the corridor; and the inside door between the lumber-room and your office. We couldn't get into the office by the entrance door from the hall on account of the combination lock, but we could and

did get into the lumber-room easily enough from the corridor—the door's not even locked, as you know, sir. And that's how we got into the private office—from the lumber-room, here, through the door between."

"But how—?" began Quarrier. "That door is a steel one; it was locked—I'll swear to that. You didn't jimmy it; you didn't have a Fourth Dimension handy, did you, Harrison? But—go on; it's beyond me, I'll confess.

Harrison permitted himself the ghost of a grin.

"Why—just a newspaper, and a bit of wire, sir—that was how it was done. I didn't dare unlock the connecting door—beforehand, sir—from the office side; I never had the chance. I was never alone in the office, sir, even for a second, as you know; but there's a clearance of nearly half an inch, sir, beneath that connecting door—just enough for the newspaper. From the lumber-room here I pushed the paper under the door, into the office, and then, with the wire, it wasn't so difficult to push the key out of the lock; the door was locked from the office side, of course.

"The key fell on the paper; we pulled the paper with the key on it back under the door, sir, into the lumber-room here, and—we just *unlocked* the connecting door there, and walked into the office. Afterwards I locked the door again, from the office side, and I just did make it out the front door of the office, when I heard your step on the stair. *He* was waiting for me in the lumber-room; he said it was safer. Anyway, I just did make it along the hall and into the lumber-room by the hall entrance before you came."

He paused, a queer expression in his face.

"But I don't understand how you *knew*, if you'll excuse me, sir—how you suspected. Afterward, from the corridor, you saw our light when we were ready to come out; we thought you'd gone for good, of course . . . But nothing was touched, sir, except—that is—of course—" He stumbled.

Quarrier silenced him with upraised hand.

"I didn't *suspect*, Harrison—I *knew*," he said. "And I heard, through the keyhole of that connecting door, the ticking of that watch of yours; it's big enough. That helped, of course. But that was afterward. There was one little thing you overlooked, and, for the matter of that, so did I—nearly."

There came the sound of heavy footsteps on the concrete flooring of the corridor, voices: His guards, summoned by Quarrier's "light-bombs."

Quarrier continued, as if he had not heard:

"Well—it was right under my eyes, but I almost missed it, at that. I saw it moving, and I knew that *something* must have *made* it move."

He paused, with a faint grimace of recollection.

"You see—you had your hat on in the office, didn't you? . . . Yes, I thought so. You're a bit deaf, too . . . Well, you should have been—to Marston. But that's past. And you have a good, thick crop of hair—*so far*."

Quarrier smiled frostily. "Well, you struck against it and set it moving—that was all. You never noticed it. Because it was—*the chain from the electrolier*, Harrison, and that was how—"

"You caught us, sir! I—I'm glad. You might call it a—"

"—Chain of circumstance," finished Quarrier, his eyes outward, gazing into the new dawn.

Another story by HAMILTON CRAIGIE *will appear in the next issue of* WEIRD TALES

The

Place of Madness

By Merlin Moore Taylor

"NONSENSE. A penitentiary is not intended to be a place for coddling and pampering those who have broken the law."

Stevenson, chairman of the Prison Commission, waved a fat hand in the direction of the convict standing at the foot of the table.

"This man," he went on, "has learned in some way that the newspapers are 'gunning' for the warden and he is seizing the opportunity to make a play for sympathy in his own behalf. I'll admit that these tales he tells of brutality toward the prisoners are well told, but I believe that he is stretching the facts. They can't be true. Discipline must be maintained in a place like this even if it requires harsh measures to do it at times."

"There is no call for brutality, however," exclaimed the convict, breaking the rule that prisoners must not speak unless they are spoken to.

Then, ignoring the chairman's upraised hand, he went on: "We are treated like beasts here! If a man so much as opens his mouth to ask a civil and necessary question, the reply is a blow. Dropping a knife or a fork or a spoon at the table is punished by going without the next meal. Men too ill to work are driven to the shops with the butts of guns. Petty infractions of the most trivial rules mean the dark cell and a diet of bread and water.

"Do you know what the dark cell is? 'Solitary' they call it here. 'Hell' would be a better name. Steel all around you, steel walls, steel door, steel ceiling, steel floor. Not a cot to lie upon, not even a stool to sit upon. Nothing but the bare floor. And darkness! Not a ray of light ever penetrates the dark cell once the door is closed upon you. No air comes to you except through a small ventilator in the roof. And even that has an elbow to keep the light away from you.

"Is it any wonder that even the most refractory prisoner comes out of there broken—broken in mind, in body, in spirit? And some of them go insane—stark, staring mad—after only a few hours of it. And for what? I spent two days in 'solitary' because I collapsed from weakness at my bench in the shoe factory.

"See this scar?" He pointed to a livid mark over one eye. "A guard did that with the barrel of his rifle because I was unable to get up and go back to work when he told me. He knocked me senseless, and when I came to I was in 'solitary.' Insubordination, they called it. Two days they kept me in there when I ought to have been in a hospital. Two days of hell and torture because I was ill. People prate of reforming men in prison. It's the other way around. It makes confirmed criminals of them—if they don't go mad first."

The chairman wriggled in his seat and cleared his throat impatiently.

"We have listened to you for quite a while, my man," he said pompously,

"but I, for one, have enough. A dozen or more prisoners have testified here today, and none of them has made a statement to back up the charges you have made."

"And why?" demanded the prisoner. "Because they are afraid to tell the truth. They know that they would be beaten and starved and deprived of their 'good time' on one excuse or another if they even hinted at what they know. You wouldn't believe them, anyhow. You don't believe me, yet I probably shall suffer for what I have said here. But that doesn't matter. They can't take any 'good time' away from me. I'm in for life."

His voice grew bitter.

"And that is one reason I have gone into this thing in detail—for my sake and the sake of others who cannot look forward to ever leaving this place. The law has decreed that we shall live and die here, but the law said nothing about torturing us."

"This board guaranteed its protection to all who were called upon to testify here," answered the chairman. "It has no desire to whitewash any person in connection with the investigation which is being made, and in order that there might be no reflection upon the manner in which this hearing is conducted neither the warden, his deputies nor guards have been permitted to attend. Unless you have tangible evidence to offer us and can give the names of those who can back up your charges, you may go."

"Just a minute." It was the board member nearest the prisoner who interrupted. Then, to the convict, "You said, I believe, that only a few hours in the dark cell often will drive a man insane. Yet you spent two days there. You are not insane, are you?"

"No, sir." The convict spoke respectfully. "My conscience was clear and I was able to serve my time there without breaking. But another day or so would have finished me. You testified against me at my trial, didn't you? I hold no grudge against you for that, sir. I give you credit for doing only what you thought was your duty. Your testimony clinched the case against me. Yet I am innocent—"

The chairman rapped sharply upon the table.

"I utterly fail to see what all this has to do with the matter under investigation," he protested irritably. "We are not trying this man's case. The courts have passed upon that. He is just like all the rest. Any one of them is ready to swear on a stack of Bibles that he is innocent. Let's get on with this investigation."

The convict bowed silently and turned toward the door beyond which the guards were waiting to conduct him back to his cell. A hand upon his arm detained him.

"Mr. Chairman," said Blalock, the member who had questioned the prisoner, "I request that this man be permitted to go on with what he was saying. I shall have no more questions to ask. You were saying—he prompted the man beside him.

"I was saying that I was innocent," resumed the convict. "I was about to add that not even a man who is guiltless of wrongdoing would be able to withstand the terrors of solitary for any length of time. You, for instance, are a physician, a man of sterling reputation against whom no one ever has breathed a word. Yet I doubt that you could endure several hours in the dark cell. If you would only try it, you would know for yourself that I have spoken the truth. Gentlemen, I beg of you to do all in your power to abolish the dark cell. Men can stand just so much without cracking, and if you will dig into the facts you will find that nine times out of ten it is men broken in 'solitary' who are responsible for the outbreaks in prison. That is all."

He bowed respectfully and was gone.

"CLEVER TALKER, that fellow," commented the secretary of the commission, breaking the silence. "He almost had me believing him. Who is

he, Blalock? You had him summoned, I believe."

The physician nodded.

"I confess it was as much from personal interest in the man as from any hope that he might give valuable evidence here," he said. "He surprised me with his outburst. He is a clever talker. Ellis is his name—Martin Ellis—and he comes of a splendid and well-to-do family. University graduate and quite capable of having carved out a wonderful career. But he was idolized at home and given more money than was good for him. It made him an idler and a young ne'er-do-well. But whatever he did he did openly, and I never heard of anything seriously wrong until he was convicted of the crime which brought him here."

"Murder, I suppose?" Stevenson, the chairman, was interested in spite of himself. "He spoke of being in for life."

"Yes; killing a girl. Agnes Keller was her name. Poor, but well thought of. Church worker, member of the choir and so on. It was brought out at the trial—in fact. Ellis told it himself—that he was infatuated with her and they were together a great deal. Not openly, of course, because old man Ellis, his father, would have pawed up the earth. The affair ended like all these clandestine affairs, specially if the girl is young and pretty and poor. It was the theory of the prosecution that when she discovered her condition she became frantic and demanded that Ellis marry her, the alternative being that she would go to his father with the story. It was charged that he killed her to avoid making a choice. The evidence against him was purely circumstantial, but the jury held it was conclusive.

"Ellis admitted on the stand that they often went riding in his motor-car at night. One damning fact against him was that he was seen driving, alone and rapidly, along the country lane near where her body was found. He had nothing to back up his claim that he felt ill and went for a drive in an effort to relieve a sick headache. Of course he denied absolutely that he was responsible for her condition, or that he ever knew of it, but the jury was out less than an hour. The only hitch, I learned later, was whether to affix the death penalty or not."

"He said you were a witness against him. What part did you play?" asked Stevenson.

"An unwilling one," answered Blalock, quickly. "I did not believe that Ellis was guilty then. I am not convinced of it now. But as the girl's physician, and presumably one of those to whom she would go in her trouble, I was questioned as soon as the coroner had held an autopsy. I admitted that she had confided in me and that I had agreed that the man responsible should marry her. She did not tell me his name, but my evidence added weight to the theory that Ellis killed her to avoid marrying her."

The door to the room swung open and the warden stood on the threshold.

"May I come in?" he asked. "Dinner is almost ready and I thought I had better give you warning."

He crossed to an empty chair and sat down.

"We concluded the taking of evidence quite a little while ago," said the chairman. "Since then Dr. Blalock has been entertaining us with the story of the crime of that fellow Martin Ellis, who was one of the witnesses. Quite unusual."

"Yes, the sheriff who brought him here told me all about it," answered the warden. "He's hard to handle. Had trouble with one of the guards a while back and we had to discipline him."

"Two days in the solitary cell on bread and water, wasn't it?" asked Blalock. "He didn't have any good word for it."

The warden flushed.

"Few of those who taste of it do," he admitted. "Too much a matter of being left alone with your thoughts and your conscience. They'll punish you as much as anything can do. Well, suppose you take an adjournment and come

on to dinner? Will you want to make the regular inspection tour of the prison?"

"Oh, sure," yawned the chairman. "Undoubtedly, everything is all right, as usual, but if we omitted it the newspapers would have something to howl about."

He rose, and, with the rest of the commission trailing them, followed the warden to the dining-room.

"Well, let's make the inspection and have it over with," Stevenson suggested, when the meal was finished. "Where do we go first, warden?"

"Through the shops and smaller buildings first, then the cells. That way you'll end up closest to the administration building and you can go back into conference with the least delay."

Uniformed guards stood smartly at attention as the warden piloted the commission through. "Trusties" ingratiatingly hovered about the party, eager to be of service. Great steel-barred doors swung open at the approach of the commission and clanged to noisily behind it. The afternoon sunlight, slanting through the bars, relieved the somberness of the cell blocks and revealed them in their spick-and-spanness, made ready for the occasion.

"Well, everything seems to be O. K.," said the chairman, as the party again drew near to the offices. "Anyone else got any suggestions?"

"Yes, I'd like to see the dark cell," answered the secretary. "I don't recall ever visiting it, and that fellow Ellis interested me. He said it was a pocket edition of Hades. Where is it, warden?"

The warden assumed a jocular air.

"You'll be disappointed," he warned. "It's down in the basement, where prisoners who want to do so can yell and scream to their hearts' content without disturbing anyone. A trifle dark, of course, but if to some it is hell it is because they choose to make it so. If you really want to see it, come ahead. It's not occupied, however."

He did not mention that he had seen to that. With all this uproar about the management of the prison, it wasn't safe to take chances. The commission, he had foreseen, might decide to make a *real* investigation, and you never could tell in just what condition a man would be after several hours in "solitary."

"THERE you are gentlemen?" he said, with a flourish of the hand when a "trusty" had switched on the lights in the basement. "Not *one* dark cell, but half a dozen."

He stood back as the members of the commission crowded forward and peered into the dark recesses. Over each doorway a single electric bulb shone weakly, far too weakly for the rays to penetrate into the corners. The solid, bolt-studded doors stood open, formidable and forbidding.

"Any of you want try it?" asked the warden from the background.

"Sure, let Blalock take a whirl at one of them," suggested the secretary. "His conscience ought to be clear enough not to trouble him. Go on, doctor; try it and let us know how it feels. I'd do it myself, but I don't dare risk *my* conscience."

Blalock, standing just inside the doorway of one of the cells, turned and for a moment surveyed them in silence.

"Your suggestion, of course, was made in jest," he said. "But," a sudden ring came into his voice, "I am going to take you up on it! No," as a chorus of exclamations came from the others, "my mind is quite made up. Warden, I want this as realistic as possible. You will please provide me with a suit of the regulation convict clothing."

"Well, of all the blamed fools," ejaculated the chairman. Then he gave his shoulders a shrug. "Go on and get a zebra suit, warden. I only hope this doesn't get into the papers."

A "trusty" was dispatched for the striped suit. When it had been brought Blalock already had removed his outer garments, amid the bantering of the others. He did not deign to answer them until he had buttoned about him the prison jacket and jammed upon his head the little striped cap.

"I guess I'm ready," he said then. "You gentlemen have seen fit to ridicule

the experiment I am about to make. But I say to you that I am doing this in all seriousness. I do not believe that 'solitary' is as bad as Ellis pictured it to us. I am going to find out. Warden, you will please see that conditions here are made exactly like those which surround a prisoner in this place."

He whirled upon his heel and strode into a cell.

"How long do you want to be left in there?" asked the warden. "Fifteen minutes or so?"

"Ellis declared his belief that I could not stand it for an hour or two," came the reply from the depths of the cell. "Suppose that we make it two hours. At the end of that time you may return and release me. But not a minute before."

"Very well, Number 9962," replied the warden. "You now are alone with your conscience."

The heavy door clanged shut, and a faint *click* told Blalock that the light above the door had been snapped off. Then the sound of footsteps, growing fainter and fainter, the *clang* of the door leading to the basement—then silence. Blalock was alone.

Feeling with his hands, he made his way to a corner of the cell and sat down upon the bare, hard floor.

HE SHUT his eyes and set about concentrating his mind upon some subject other than the fact that he was a prisoner, of his own free will to be sure, but a prisoner nevertheless.

He always had prided himself upon the fact that he had the ability to drive from his thoughts at will all topics but the one which he desired. Now, he chose, at random, to begin preparing an outline of a lecture which he was scheduled to deliver within two weeks before a convention of medical men.

Back home in his study, Blalock was accustomed to stretching out at length in an easy chair, his feet upon a stool, a pillow beneath his head. Here his legs were stretched out upon the floor at right angles to his body, held bolt upright by the steel wall at his back. He sought to relieve the strain by keeping his knees in the air, but the floor offered no firm foothold and his heels slipped.

Irritated, Blalock slid away from the corner and tried lying upon his back, his eyes staring up into the darkness above him. Immediately that position, too, grew irksome and he turned over upon first one side, than the other, and finally he got upon his feet and leaned against the wall. Thus another fifteen or twenty minutes passed, he judged. He found that it was impossible to concentrate his thoughts, so he resolved to let them wander.

Leaning against the wall speedily proved uncomfortable, and Blalock began to pace around and around the narrow confines of the cell. Four paces one way, two at right angles, then four, then two. It reminded him of a big bear he once had watched in a zoo, striding back and forth behind the bars, but never very far from the door which shut him off from the outside world and freedom.

Suddenly Blalock discovered that he had made the circuit so many times in the darkness that he was turned around, that he did not know at which end lay the door to the cell. He began to hunt for it, feeling with his sensitive surgeon's fingers for the place where the door fitted into the wall of the cell.

It annoyed him, after making two trips around, that he had failed to locate the door. He could tell by counting the corners as he came to them. The door fitted into its casing so well that he could not distinguish it from the grooves where the plates of the cell were joined together.

Immediately it became to him the most important thing in the world to know where lay that door. He thought of sounding the walls to see if at some point they would not give back a different sound and thus tell him what he felt he must know.

It was becoming a mania with him now. So, gently, he began rapping with his knuckles against the steel, here, there, in one place, then in another. Then he tried it all over with his ear, trained to detect, even without the aid of a stethoscope, the variations in the

beating of a human heart, pressed close against the walls.

But again he was foiled. Every spot gave forth the same hollow sound.

Angered, Blalock kicked viciously against the insensate steel. Shooting pains in his maltreated toes rewarded him and, with a growl of anguish, he dropped to the floor to nurse the injured members.

Then he became aware that his hands were stickily saturated, and he knew, when he discovered that his knuckles were skinned and raw, that it was his own blood. Desperately he fought to regain his self-control in an effort to force himself to be bland and unruffled when the warden should come to release him, as Blalock felt sure would be the case in only a few minutes at most.

He caught himself listening intently for the footsteps of the warden, or some "trusty" or guard sent to release him. He strained his ears to catch the far-away clang which would indicate that someone was coming into the basement.

But only the hissing sound of his own breath broke the tense silence. Funny he thought, how very still things could be. It required no very big stretch of the imagination to picture himself as really a recalcitrant prisoner, slapped in 'solitary' to ponder upon his misdeeds.

Going further, he recalled a story, which he had read long ago, of a man who found himself to be the only living human being, the others having been wiped out in the flicker of an eyelash by some mysterious force.

Why didn't the warden come on and let him out of here? Surely the two hours were up, and he was getting tired of it!

It would never do, however, to be caught in this frame of mind when he was released. He must emerge smiling and ready to give the lie to that clever talker, Ellis.

Once more he got up and began his circuit of the walls. He felt that he was master of himself again, and it would do no harm to try to solve the puzzle of the door that would not be found.

Perhaps the warden had been delayed by some unexpected happening. Oh, well, a few minutes longer wouldn't make any difference. Suppose that he were in Ellis' place! In for life! He didn't want to think of Ellis. But somehow the face of the "lifer" kept obtruding itself—his face and his words.

What was it that Ellis had said? "You, for instance, are a physician, a man of sterling reputation, against whom no one ever breathed a word. Yet I doubt if you could endure several hours in the dark cell."

And the warden had added that in the dark cell a man was alone with his conscience. Damn that warden! Where was he, anyhow? Blalock began to dislike him. Perhaps there was something in those stories of brutality which the newspapers had printed, after all.

Dislike for the warden began to give way to hate. Blalock wondered if the warden and that fat, pompous little Stevenson, chairman of the commission, hadn't got their heads together and decided it would be a good joke to let him stay in there a great deal longer than he had ordered. He would show them, once he got out, that he didn't relish that kind of a joke, that he wasn't a man to be trifled with.

Thus another hour passed, as he reckoned it, and his anger and passion got the best of him. He kicked the walls and hammered upon them with his clenched fists, insensible to the fact that he was injuring himself.

Then came fear—fear that he had been forgotten!

Suppose that there had been an outbreak in the prison, that the convicts were in control! Would they release him? Might they not wreak their vengeance upon him in the absence of another victim?

HE BEGAN to call, moderately at first and pausing often to listen for some response; then louder and louder, until he was screaming without cessation.

He cursed and swore, pleaded and cajoled, threatened and sought to bribe by turns, demanding only that he be

taken from this terrible place. He was dead to the fact that it was impossible for anyone to hear him, that only the reverberation of his own voice, thunderous in that narrow place, answered him. Beating down from the ceiling, thrown up from the floor, cast back into his teeth by the walls, the noise of his own making overwhelmed him, crushed him.

Stark terror held him in its icy grip now. His thoughts pounded through his brain like water in a mill race. The perspiration fell from him in rivulets as he hammered and smashed at the walls. His brain was afire. He began to realize that what Ellis had said very easily could be true. Men *did* go mad in this place! Why, he was going mad himself—mad from the torture his body was undergoing, mad from being alone with his own thoughts.

There were more lucid moments when reason desperately sought to assert itself. Blalock's cries became less violent and, moaning and sobbing softly, he began all over again that endless circuit of the cell in search of the door. Failing, he raved again and staggered from wall to wall or leaped madly toward the ceiling as if, by some miracle, escape might lie in that direction.

Exhausted at last, he sank to the floor, poignantly conscious that interminable nights and days were passing over his head and that thirst and hunger, keen and excrutiating, held him in their grasp.

At intervals, strength would come back to him, strength, backed by indomitable will power that sent him lunging to his feet to renew his battering at the walls, his frenzied shouts and screeches, in just one more effort to make himself heard.

His knuckles were broken and bleeding, his lips cracked and swollen; his voice came out shrilly from his dry and wracked throat, his body and legs were succumbing to a great weariness that would not be denied.

Came the time at last when his own voice no longer dinned into his ears, when his legs refused to obey the will that commanded them to hoist him upon his feet, when he no longer could lift his hands. His spirit was broken at last, and he gave up the struggle and sank back upon the floor. And all around him the darkness shut down—the darkness and the silence.

Then the door was thrown open, and, framed in silhouette against the light beyond, stood the warden.

"Got enough, doctor?" he called out cheerily. "Your two hours are up . . . Why don't you answer me? Dr. Blalock! What's wrong, man?"

He peered into the cell in a vain endeavor to force his eyes to penetrate the darkness. Failing, he fumbled in his clothes for a match and, with hands that shook, scratched it against the door.

Then his face went white as a sheet, he staggered where he stood and the match burned down to the flesh of his hands and scorched it. For in the far corner he had perceived, flat upon its back, a haggard, bloodstained, white-haired thing that winked and blinked at him with vacant eyes and muttered and gibbered incoherently.

REASON came back to Blalock one day many weeks later.

He opened his eyes with the light of understanding in them, and they told him from his surrounding that he was in a hospital. Outside, the sun was shining brightly, and in a little park, just beyond, birds were singing and the breeze brought him the sound of children at play.

"Awake at last, are you?" asked the white-capped nurse who came into the room just then.

"Yes," said Blalock, in a rasping whisper. He did not know it then, but the calm, soothing voice he once had boasted was his best asset in a sick room, was gone forever. The terrific strain to which he had put his vocal cords in his paroxysms in the dark cell had shattered them.

"You are doing splendidly," the nurse assured him brightly. "You have been seriously ill, but you are recovering rapidly now."

"No," said Blalock positively, as one who knows. "I shall never get well. Give me a mirror, please."

"I don't believe there is one handy," she evaded, loath to let him see the havoc in his face.

But he insisted.

"Please," he begged. "I am prepared and I do not think I will be overcome. I will be brave."

Reluctantly, then, she started to place the silvered glass in his hand. As he reached out to take it, he stopped, his hand half-way. The hand he was accustomed to see, with its tapering fingers and well-kept nails, the hand that so deftly had performed delicate operations, was gone. Instead was a slim, clawlike thing, with distorted knuckles and joints.

Blalock finally extended it, took the mirror and, slowly but steadily, brought it into line with his eyes. He had expected some changes, but not the sight that greeted him. The black, wavy hair had given place to locks of snowy white. His face was drawn and wrinkled, and lack-luster eyes stared back at him from cavernous sockets. Long he gazed at this apparition, then silently he let the mirror fall upon the cover and closed his eyes.

"Don't take it so hard, doctor," begged the nurse. "You have been through a harrowing experience and your face shows it now. But in a short time—" The lie did not come easily, and her tongue faltered.

"Never mind that," whispered Blalock. "It doesn't matter now. Send for Stevenson, please."

The chairman of the Prison Commission came without delay. Compelling himself to conceal the repulsion he felt at sight of the broken man upon the bed, he bustled in with forced pleasantries.

"Stevenson," said Blalock when finally the other had taken a chair and the nurse had withdrawn. "I have something to tell you. That day I went into the dark cell—"

"Now, now, old man," soothed Stevenson, laying a restraining hand upon the other's arm. "Don't let's talk about that. We abolished it that very day. Why bring up that awful experience of yours? No one knows about it but the commission, the warden and your doctor and nurse here. We all are pledged not to talk about it, and the newspapers didn't have a line except that you were taken ill. Let the past take care of itself, Blalock, old man, and let us talk of other things."

A flash of the old will power shone in the sick man's eyes.

"No," he said firmly. "No, Stevenson, the past cannot take care of itself. Bend closer, Stevenson, I must tell you something, and it seems I'm not strong enough yet to talk out loud.

"That day I so boastfully demanded that I be locked up in 'solitary.' I thought I knew myself and my will power. I believed that I had such control over my mind and my body that I could defy any torture man might devise, without quailing—despite the knowledge that my conscience was not the lily-white thing I had led others to believe it was. For, Stevenson, my conscience was black—as black as hell! It held the knowledge of a great sin on my part, a huge wrong that had been done another.

"But I had stifled it by my will power until I believed it a thing that was dead, that could never throw off the bondage to which I had doomed it, and arise and accuse me. It was to prove that I was superior to it that I deliberately chose to be locked up with it where, alone with my thoughts, I could prove myself the master, once for all.

"For Martin Ellis had shaken my confidence. Where before I had been certain I was doubtful, I wanted to prove him a liar and at the same time satisfy myself that I was a free man and not the galley slave of that thing which we call a guilty conscience.

"In that cell, that concience which I believed I had killed rose up to show me it had been but sleeping. Under other conditions it might have slept on indefinitely. In there it overwhelmed me with a sense of its power and made me feel that I was about to meet my

God without even so much as a veil behind which to hide my guilty thoughts. No matter which way I turned I saw an accusing finger pointing at me out of the darkness and the solitude was shattered by a voice which cried out that those who sin must pay and pay and pay until the slate is wiped clean. And I had sinned, but I had not paid.

"Conscience is a terrible thing once it is aroused, Stevenson. It is living, vibrant, and it lashes and scourges until it has exacted its toll. That was what it did to me there in the darkness, alone and at its mercy, and with no chance to escape. And in my agony and fear I cursed the God who had created me and saddled me with this thing. I learned my lesson, though, before I was through. I who had presumed to place my own puny will above the Great Eternal Will; I who had dared to believe that the great order of things, the plan by which we all must live and die, must make an exception of me, learned that I was wrong.

"*Martin Ellis is innocent*, Stevenson, and I trust to you to see that justice is done. He did not kill Agnes Keller and I knew it. And I stood by and let him be convicted. More, I took the stand against him and helped to make that conviction certain. I told only the truth in my testimony, but I did not tell all I knew and what I omitted would have saved Ellis. I did not want to testify at all, but the prosecution refused to let me take advantage of the confidential relation which is supposed to exist between physician and patient.

"The state was right in its theory that the man who strangled Agnes Keller did so because he was responsible for her condition and did not wish to marry her. She came to me in my study on the night she met her death and told me she had discovered she was about to become a mother.

She refused to take any steps I suggested and she said that her child, when it was born, must have the legal right to bear the name of its father. And that very night she was lured into an automobile with the promise that the man who was to blame would take her to a nearby town and make her his wife. But on that lonely country road he turned upon her and killed her with his bare hands.

And how do I know these things? Because, Stevenson, I was the man responsible for her condition, *and it was I who killed her!*"

The Closing Hand

A Powerful Short Story

by Farnsworth Wright

SOLITARY and forbidding, the house stared specterlike through scraggly trees that seemed to shrink from its touch.

The green moss of decay lay on its dank roofs, and the windows, set in deep cavities, peered blindly at the world as if through eyeless sockets. So forbidding was its aspect that boys, on approaching its cheerless gables, stopped their whistling and passed on the opposite side of the street.

Across the fields, a few huddled cottages gazed through the falling rain, as if wondering what family could be so bold as to take up its abode within the gloomy walls of that old mansion, whose carpetless floors for two years had not felt the tread of human feet.

In an attic room of the house two sisters lay in bed, but not asleep. The younger sister cringed under the dread inspired by the bleak place. The elder laughed at her childish fears, but the younger felt the spell of the old building and was afraid.

"I suppose there is really nothing to frighten me in this dreary old house," she admitted, without conviction in her voice, "but the very feel of the place is horrible. Mother shouldn't have left us alone in this gruesome place."

"Stupid," her sister scolded, "with all the silverware downstairs, somebody has to be here, for fear of burglars."

"Oh, don't talk about burglars!" pleaded the younger girl. "I am afraid. I keep imagining I hear ghostly footsteps."

Her sister laughed.

"Go to sleep, Goosie," she said. "'Haunted' houses are nothing but superstition. They exist only in imagination."

"Why has nobody lived here for two years, then? They tell me that for five years every family moved out after being here just a short time. The whole atmosphere of the house is ghastly. And I can't forget how the older Berkheim girl was found stabbed to death in her bed, and nobody ever knew how it happened. Why, she may have been murdered in this very room!"

"Go to sleep and don't scare yourself with such silly talk. Mother will be with us tomorrow night, and Dad will be back next day. Now go to sleep."

The elder sister soon dropped into slumber, but the younger lay open-eyed, staring into the black room and shuddering at every stifled scream of the wind or distant growl of thunder. She began to count, hoping to hypnotize herself into drawsiness, but at every slight noise she started, and lost her count.

Suddenly she turned and shook her sister by the shoulder.

"Edith, somebody is prowling around downstairs!" she whispered. "Listen! Oh, what shall we do?"

The elder sister struck a match and lit the candle. Then she slipped on her dressing-gown, and drew on her slippers.

"You're not going down there? Edith, tell me you're not going downstairs! It might be that murdered Berkheim girl! Edith, don't—"

Edith shot a glance of withering scorn at her sister, who lay on the bed

with blanched face and wide, terrified eyes.

"There is something moving around downstairs, and I'm going to find out what it is," she said.

Taking the candle, she left the room. Her younger sister lay in the darkness, listening to the pattering of rain on the roof and straining her ears to catch the slightest sound. The noise downstairs ceased, but the wind rose and the rain beat upon the roof in sudden furious blasts that made her heart jump wildly. . . . .

Ten minutes passed—twenty minutes—and Edith had not returned.

A door slammed, and the younger sister thought she heard something moving again, but the wind began to sob and drowned out all other noises. Between gusts, she heard the portentous sound, and each time it seemed nearer.

Then—she started as she realized that something was coming up the stairs. Once she thought she heard a cry, to which the wind joined its plaintive voice in a weird duet.

Nearer and nearer the strange noise came. It mounted the stairs, step by step, heard only when the wind and rain softened their voices. It passed the first landing, and moved slowly up the second flight, while the girl fearfully awaited its coming.

The wind howled until the house quaked; it shrilled past the eaves and fled across the fields like a hunted ghost.

And now the girl's pounding pulses drowned out the screaming of the wind, for the presence had *invaded her bedroom!*

She cowered under the covers, a cold perspiration chilling her body until her teeth chattered. Her imagination conjured up frightful things—a disembodied spirit come to destroy her—a corpse from the grave, gibbering in terror because it could not tear the cerements from its face—the murdered Berkheim girl, with the knife still sheathed in her heart—or some escaped beast, licking its lips in greedy anticipation of the feast her tremulous body would provide. Or was it a murderer, who, having killed her sister, was now bent on completing his bloody work?

A flash of lightning split the sky, and the thunder bellowed its terrifying warning. The girl threw back the bedclothes and shrank to the wall, her eyes starting from their sockets, fearful lest another flash reveal some sight too ghastly to contemplate.

Slowly the being dragged itself across the floor, lifted itself onto the bed, and uttered a choking sound of agony.

The girl sat petrified. Then, timorously, she extended a shaky hand, but quickly withdrew it in dread of some hideous contact.

Again she thrust her trembling hand into the gloom, farther, farther, until it touched something shaggy and wet.

A clammy hand closed over hers, and she started to her feet, with a horrified scream.

The icy hand tightened with a sickening tremor, and dragged her down. Then her tortured senses gave way, and she fell back unconscious upon the bed. . . . .

WHEN she awoke, it was day. Beside her, on the bed, lay the bleeding body of her sister, Edith, stabbed in the breast by the burglar she had tried to frighten away.

The younger girl was clutching the clotted wisps of hair that had fallen across the breast of her sister, whose cold hand had closed over hers in the last convulsive shudder of death.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT
Has Written Another Story For
WEIRD TALES
"The Snake Fiend"
It Will Appear In The
April Issue

Howard Ellis Davis Relates Some Extraordinary Adventures With

The UNKNOWN BEAST

AT THE EDGE of the little settlement of Bayou le Tor lapped the black waters from which the village had been named. A mile to the south, they lost themselves in the Mississippi Sound. Northward, they wound among somber swamps, to disappear at last into the marshes above.

Giant cypress trees crowded down to the very edge of the settlement, as if jealous of the small space of cleared land it occupied beside the bayou, and to one not accustomed to the place it seemed that an evil boding lurked forever within the depths of those overhanging, gloomy swamps.

But until the unknown Beast first made its mysterious presence felt, no harm for the people of Bayou le Tor ever had come out of those swamps, except the deadly malaria, which clutched its victims in shaking agues and burning fevers that consumed life as a woods fire might consume a strip of dried sedge grass.

Before this strange death that had come to haunt the night swamps, they shrank in helpless terror. Cows were driven in from their pastures while the sun was yet high. Mothers called in their sallow-faced children from play as soon as the shadows began to lengthen.

The first victim had been Swan Davis, an old fisherman who lived by himself on the edge of the bayou above the settlement. He had been found in the swamp, dead. At first it was thought that he had been beaten to death, he was so broken about the body.

Finally, however, it was decided he had been crushed by some mysterious, unknown force. Something had caught him and squeezed him until his bones had cracked like dry reeds.

Then the three Buntly boys, driving in a bunch of steers from the marshes, were overtaken by night on the swamp road. The cattle had been going peacefully enough, when suddenly they had become frightened and lumbered off ahead, bellowing madly. Themselves frightened at the queer behavior of the animals, the boys followed, as fast as they could on foot.

That is, two of them did; for when Jard and Peter Buntly emerged from the shadows of the swamp road, they found that their brother, Sims, was not with them.

Terror-stricken though they were, they had returned into the swamp, calling his name. When they saw nothing of him, and he did not answer their calls, they went quickly home and reported what had happened. All night long, bearing flaming torches, the men of the settlement beat up and down the swamp. Toward morning, they found

the young man's body, bruised and broken, but no trace of what had killed him.

When the people of Bayou le Tor gathered to discuss the circumstances surrounding these two mysterious deaths, the negroes, and some others, declared that an evil spirit haunted the gloomy fastness to the north of the settlement, while the more conservative agreed that some creature strange to those parts, some unknown beast, was ranging the night swamps, a creature that killed for the love of killing.

Armed with shotgun and rifle, they hunted him. They set bear-traps, baited with an entire quarter of beef hung above. But no one ventured into the swamps after dark, until, one night, ten of the best men in the settlement formed a party and rode out on horseback through the swamp road.

Armed with pistol and sheath-knife, they rode, two by two, knee to knee, their horses following each other nose to tail, so that if any one of the party were attacked they all could turn and fight in a body.

Nothing happened until they were on their way back; then Walter Brandon—who, because he was one of their bravest, brought up the rear—grew careless and lagged behind. Suddenly, his horse came charging in among the others, riderless.

They could find no trace of Walter, and the other nine could only ride in and break the news to his young wife, who carried a baby at her breast.

The next day, the girl's father, old Arner Horn, secured the services of a small, battered automobile and crossed two counties to see Ed Hardin and beg that he come and deliver them from this unknown beast that, one by one, was killing the men-folk of Bayou le Tor.

IN HIS own county Ed Hardin was a deputy sheriff, and the reputation of his prowess had traveled far. Each summer, when the fishing was best on the Sound, he came to Bayou le Tor. Each winter, he came to hunt wild turkeys in the swamps that surrounded the settlement. The people had grown to know him well, and they knew that he feared neither man, beast, nor the devil.

He returned in the automobile with Arner, bringing with him his young friend, Alex Rowe. When they reached Bayou le Tor, the news awaited them that Walter's body, which bore on it the same marks as those others who had been killed, had been found floating on the waters of the bayou, and that it was being held at the water's edge so that Ed Hardin might see for himself the nature of death which this creature inflicted upon its victims.

After he had seen, Ed Hardin came away alone, grim-mouthed. When he entered Arner's yard, it already was growing dark, the night breeze rustling in the liveoaks overhead. He went to the barn and saddled Arner's bay mare. Having led her to the front fence, he tied her there and went into the house.

In the hallway, which divided the house through the middle, he paused as he heard in the room beside him the low sobbing of a woman. Then he passed on to the room that had been assigned to him and Alex Rowe. A small kerosene lamp had been lighted and set upon the dresser, and in the light of this he was buckling on a belt holding a broad hunting-knife and a pistol when Alex burst in upon him.

"Ed Hardin," cried the young man, "what is that mare doin' at the front fence? Where be you goin'?"

"I'm goin' ter hunt that beast, Alex."

"Yer ain't goin' ter do that thing, Ed! Yer don't know what hit is. How—"

"I'm goin', Alex."

"But, Ed, hit's *night*. Wait till daylight. The last two times folks went out on the swamp road at night they was er man killed."

Broad-shouldered, sparely-made, the big deputy drew himself up to his full height and turned to gaze for a moment at his young friend.

"I'm goin' now," he said calmly.

"But, Ed, you heerd what they said 'bout the schooner up in the bayou. Hit's been layin' there fer two weeks, 'thout dealin's with nobody. You heerd what Rensie Bucker, the ole nigger what uster be er sailor, said. He said

he paddled up in his dugout by that schooner an' them folks on board is India folks. He says that in their lan' they's strange beasts an' reptiles, an' that mebbe they've got one of 'em loose in the swamp, mebbe put hit ter watch the swamp road."

"Ef hit's been sot ter watch the swamp road at night," said Ed, "that's jes wher I want ter go. I want ter meet it."

"Wait, Ed. Wait till I git holt of er hoss. I'm goin' with yer."

A soft smile played for a moment about Ed Hardin's grim mouth.

"No, Alex," he said: "I reckon I'll go by myse'f."

As he was untying the mare, those who had returned to the house gathered about him and, as Alex had done, tried to prevent his going off alone into the swamp at night.

But he swung lightly to the saddle and galloped out through the settlement, into the shadows of the giant cypress trees.

THE MARE was a spirited and nervous animal, and she leaped and shied as she danced among the stagnant pools that lay black in the swamp road.

In thus going out deliberately to use himself as a bait for the Unknown Beast, Ed felt that he could depend largely upon her agility and quickness to prevent being taken unawares by a sudden rush from the darkness. He drew from its holster his heavy Colt's revolver and thrust it through his belt in front, within convenient reach.

So dark was the black tunnel of the road that he could see no space in front of him, and he let the reins lie slack on the mare's neck, so that she might be undisturbed in picking her footing. And as he plunged deeper into the swamp, he experienced a lonely boding that was new to him.

Time and again, he had gone fearlessly out alone in the pursuit and capture of desperate men. Now, however, he did not know what nature of creature it was he sought, and he had to invite an attack from the darkness in order to get in touch with it.

The night was murky, almost sticky in its heaviness, and the swamp seemed strangely silent. Only the occasional call of some night bird pierced the stillness. He was familiar with the road, having traveled it frequently, and the places where violence had occurred had been described to him in detail.

A few hundred yards to the left of the road, where he now was riding, the fisherman had met his death. He passed the place where Brandon last had been seen, and, soon after, entered the deeper recess of the swamp where the herder had been snatched into the darkness of death. Plainly, this neighborhood of violence was the creature's lurking-place.

Suddenly, the mare shied, snorted, and stood quivering, her head turned as though she saw or smelled something at the side of the road. He raised his pistol, which he now held ready cocked in his hand, and fired quickly into the darkness. As he had only one hand on the reins, it was some moments after the report before he could calm the startled animal sufficiently to proceed on his way.

Twice more, at indications of terror from his horse, guided by her forward-pointed ears, Ed Hardin fired into the black shadows at the side of the road, the discharges making lurid flashes in the darkness.

The Unknown Beast evidently was near, following him through the brush —or over the treetops. If it were on the ground, he hoped for the slender chance of killing or wounding it before it had an opportunity to attack.

After each shot, as well as he could for the plunging of the mare, he listened intently for some cry of pain, some movement of the bushes; but the silence of the shadows was unbroken. The strain was nerve-wracking, and he had a wild desire to whirl the mare about and speed away in mad flight. He could not urge her out of a slow, hesitating walk, and she frequently shied from one side of the road to the other, with those periodic halts of trembling fear.

Then the road ran from beneath the arches of the swamp and passed over a corduroy crossing, bordered on each

side by a dense growth of titi. The mare went more quietly now, and Ed began to hope that some of his shots had taken effect. He breathed more freely, now that the branches no longer drooped overhead.

Presently, however, he found himself beneath spreading liveoaks. These, flanking the road on either side, sent their giant limbs horizontally across. He peered from side to side, his eyes straining to penetrate the gloom, each indistinct tree trunk assuming a sinister outline.

Overhead, the trees towered in cavernous depths, and suddenly, with a swish of leaves and branches, out of them dropped a great, dark object!

THE frightened mare leaped forward; but the nameless creature alighted behind the saddle.

Hardin snatched out his pistol, only to find that he was unable to use it. For he had been caught in a giant embrace that pinioned his arms to his sides, an embrace against which his own great strength was powerless.

The mare ran desperately, her supple body close to the ground, her graceful neck outstretched. Out from the swamp she sped, crossing a reach of flat country, once heavily covered with pines. The timber long since had been cut, only the stumps remaining, charred by forest fires—hordes of black ghosts crowding down to the edge of the road on both sides.

It was a wild ride for the man, with death perched there behind. The great arms, wound about him, were slowly squeezing the breath from his body, and beneath that embrace he felt his ribs bend inward to the point of cracking. Desperately, he maintained his grip on the saddle with his knees.

Then, just before consciousness would have left him, he raised his legs and flung himself sideways. The saddle slipped under the mare's belly. Carried by the momentum, but with that crushing grip never relaxing, the man and the terrible creature which held him hurtled through the air.

They struck with a *thud* against a shattered stump at the side of the road, while the frightened mare sped on. The murderous creature was next the stump and at the impact its hold on Ed Hardin loosened. Having slipped from the great arms, Ed flung himself over and rolled for several feet to one side.

The pistol long since had dropped from his nerveless fingers; but he now quickly drew his hunting-knife. Expecting an immediate attack with fang and claw, he lay on his back, his feet drawn up, very much in the position a cat assumes when defending itself. He knew it would be useless to pit his strength against that of the enormous creature, and the best he could hope for was to ward off an attack with his feet and watch for an opportunity to reach and drive home the knife.

And suddenly it was looming there above him. For an instant it seemed to hesitate, then it backed slowly away. With a quick, halting motion, walking upright like a man, it began to circle about him. Its long arms swung below its knees. A round head was set on a neck so thick and short that it seemed to spring from the shoulders themselves. As it circled about him, Ed turned also, keeping his feet always presented.

Again the creature backed off, up the road. Then it turned and walked slowly away.

For a moment Ed Hardin lay watching it, unwilling to change his position. Then, tentatively, he raised himself to a sitting position.

Suddenly, as if, without looking, the creature divined his movement, it turned about, at a distance of perhaps fifty feet.

And then, with a strangely human shriek of rage, it rushed toward him.

AN IT came through the gloom, this maddened creature, with its uncouth, hopping run, swinging its long arms from side to side.

The man dropped back into his former position, feet raised, arm held ready to strike with the knife.

Before it reached him, it dropped forward, without in the least pausing, and, propelled by both arms and legs, shot in a great, froglike leap through the air.

The shock, as it landed upon him, drove Ed Hardin's knees back against his chest. His right arm, held ready to strike with the knife, was pinned and twisted painfully.

The knife slipped from his hand. A long arm shot forward and talon-like fingers clutched his hair. With his legs doubled back as they were, once more he was seized in that giant embrace, and he felt that his knees were being pressed into his chest until it soon must crush in like a shattered eggshell.

Then consciousness left him.

. . . When his senses slowly returned, he became aware of lights flashing and horses stamping, and the sound of men's voices.

Jonas Keil was speaking, and Ed had the rare experience of hearing himself discussed after he was thought to be dead.

"—'Most on my bended knees ter git 'im not ter do it. But he said he wouldn't feel right ter let Death run loose unhindered, long as he was livin' an' with strength ter fight. An' when he rid out single-handed an' alone, the bravest man what ever drawed breath was kilt."

From his position, he judged that he had been placed on the grass at the side of the road. Near him was someone who, from an occasional quivering intake of breath, seemed to have been sobbing.

He tried to turn and see who it was, and he found that he could not so much as twitch a finger.

He heard three new arrivals come up the road, a man on horseback and two runners, the two evidently holding by the rider's stirrup leathers. The rider, as soon as he drew up, said:

"We come soon's we heerd you-all was gone ter foller Ed. Arn's bringin' the waggin. Hit'll be here terreckly; we passed hit er piece back. But Arn didn' git the straights from Cy when he come atter the waggin what hit was kilt Ed. Po' ole Ed!"

Old Rensie Bucker, the negro who once had been a sailor, speaking with the *patois* of foreign birth, replied to him:

"Hit ees Jonas, de chile-minded neegar who was shanghaed from his mammy's shack down on de point ten y'ar back. He had de mind of er chile an' de strength ob five men, wid his beeg wide shoulders an' short neck; wid de hump on his back an' his arms hangin' mos' ter his ankles. He was gentle in dem days; but de East Indee folks tuck heem off an' dey brought heem back er beast. He's frum de schooner, by his clothes, an' dey must have sot heem on de swamp road at night ter watch an' keel.

"Dere he lies, dead. De stump 'gin which he struck when he pull Meester Ed Hardin frum his hoss had er sliver which stuck mos' through heem. Den when he fit wid Meester Ed de hurt must have killed heem, because there is no other wound."

The man beside Ed Hardin spoke, and Ed recognized him.

"Alex," he said huskily.

There was a cry of amazement. Alex called for a light. Someone else, evidently startled by the voice coming from what all had thought to be a dead man, started to run, kicked over a lantern, and was cursed roundly by the others, who were crowding up.

When the wagon arrived, he was so far recovered that, with the assistance of the others, he was able to clamber painfully in and sink to the blankets on the bottom, every joint in his body aching.

The two Buntlys had called the younger men to one side and they were whispering excitedly together. Presently the riding-horses all were tied at the side of the road, and when the wagon creaked its way homeward, Ed was accompained only by Alex, who had refused to leave him, and by old Arner. Rensie had gone with the others.

Two days later, he was able to creep out to the front porch of Arner's little home and sit in the cool of a breeze that swept up from the bayou. After a space of silence, he asked:

"Arn, what'd them fellers do the yuther night? I can't git er peep outen 'em."

"They foun' right smart of stuff in boxes, what Rensie said was some sorte

dope, bein' unloaded from the schooner. But they th'owed hit in the water."

"I ain't intrusted in no dope, Arn. I say what'd they do?"

"The leader of the gang confessed, after he'd been questioned by Rensie, an' when he saw the jig was up, anyhow. They had sot Jonas ter keep folks skeerd off the swamp road at night, by killin' whosomever come there. They was goin' ter git er truck an' haul that stuff off somewheres."

"Well, what'd the boys do?"

Reflectively, Arner stroked his short, heavy beard. He spat into the yard. Then he turned to the deputy:

"Ed," he said slowly, "yo' comin' down here, an', single-handed an' alone, huntin' out the critter what was killin' us off will be remembered an' talked about in generations ter come—when these here swamps is cleared off an' drained an' producin' corn an' taters. But sich er little matter as er schooner lyin' at the bottom of the bayou gatherin' barnacles is soon forgot, an' let's you an' me fergit that part of hit, too."

Are You Reading

DETECTIVE TALES

IT'S THE BEST MAGAZINE OF

Detective and Mystery Fiction

Ask Any Newsdealer for a Copy

The Basket

An Odd Little Tale

By HERBERT J. MANGHAM

MRS. BUHLER told him at first that she had no vacancies, but as he started away she thought of the little room in the basement.

He turned back at her call.

"I have got a room, too," she said, "but it's a very small one and in the basement. I can make you a reasonable price, though, if you'd care to look at it."

The room was a problem. She always hesitated to show it to people, because so often they seemed insulted at her suggestion that they would be satisfied with such humble surroundings. If she gave it to the first applicant, he would likely be a disreputable character who might detract from the respectability of her house, and she would have to face the embarrassment of getting rid of him. So she was content for weeks at a time to do without the pittance the room brought her.

"How much is it?" asked the man.

"Seven dollars a month."

"Let me see it."

She called her husband to take her place at the desk, picked up a bunch of keys and led the way to the rear of the basement. The room was a narrow cell, whose one window was slightly below the level of a tiny, bare back yard, closed in by a board fence.

A tottering oak dresser was pushed up close to the window, and a small square table, holding a pitcher and washbowl, was standing beside it. An iron single-bed against the opposite wall left barely enough space for one straight-backed chair and a narrow path from the door to the window. A curtain, hanging across one corner, and a couple of hooks in the wall provided a substitute for a closet.

"You can have the use of the bathroom on the first floor," said Mrs. Buhler. "There is no steam heat in the basement, but I will give you an oil stove to use if you want it. The oil won't cost you very much. Of course, it never gets real cold in San Francisco, but when the fogs come in off the bay you ought to have something to take the chill off the room."

"I'll take it."

The man pulled out a small roll of money and counted off seven one-dollar bills.

"You must be from the East," remarked Mrs. Buhler, smiling at the paper money.

"Yes."

Mrs. Buhler, looking at his pale hair and eyes and wan mustache, never thought of asking for references. He seemed as incapable of mischief as a retired fire horse, munching his grass and dreaming of past adventures.

He told her that his name was Dave Scannon.

And that was all the information he ever volunteered to anybody in the rooming-house

AN HOUR later he moved in. By carrying in one suitcase and transferring its contents to the dresser drawers he was installed.

The other roomers scarcely noticed his advent. He always walked straight across the little lobby without looking directly at anyone, never stopping except to pay his rent, which he did promptly on the fifth of every month.

He did not leave his key at the desk when he went out, as was the custom of the house, but carried it in his pocket. The chambermaid never touched his room. At his request she gave him a broom, and every Sunday morning she left towels, sheets and a pillowcase hanging on his doorknob. When she returned, she would find his soiled towels and linen lying in a neat pile beside his door.

Impelled by curiosity, Mrs. Buhler once entered the room with her master key. There was not so much as a hair to mar the bare tidiness. A comb and brush on the dresser and a pile of newspapers were the only visible evidences of occupancy. The oil stove was gathering dust in the corner: it had never been used. She carried it out with her: it would be just the thing for that old lady in the the north room who always complained of the cold in the afternoons, when the rest of the hotel was not uncomfortable enough to justify turning on the steam.

The old lady was sitting in the lobby one afternoon when he came home from work.

"Is that your basement roomer?" she asked.

She watched him until he disappeared at the end of the hall.

"Oh, I couldn't think where I'd seen him. But I remember now—he's a sort of porter and general helper at that large bakery on lower Market Street."

"I really didn't know where he worked," admitted Mrs. Buhler. "I had thought of asking him several times, but he's an awfully hard man to carry on a conversation with."

He had been at the rooming-house four months when he received his first letter. Its envelope proclaimed it a hay-fever cure advertisement.

As he was not in the habit of leaving his key at the desk, the letter remained in his box for three days. Finally Mr. Buhler handed it to him as he was passing the desk on the way to his room.

He paused to read the inscription.

"You never receive any mail," remarked Mr. Buhler. "Haven't you any family?"

"No."

"Where is your home?"

"Catawissa, Pennsylvania."

"That's a funny name. How do you spell it?"

Scannon spelled it, and went on down the hall.

"C-a-t-a-w-i-double-s-a," repeated Mr. Buhler to his wife. "Ain't that a funny name?"

IN HIS room, Scannon removed the advertisement from its envelope and read it soberly from beginning to end.

Finished, he folded it and placed it on his pile of newspapers. Then he brushed his hair and went out again.

He ate supper at one of the little lunch counters near the Civic Center. The rest of the evening he spent in the newspaper room at the public library. He picked up eastern and western papers with impartial interest, reading the whole of each page, religiously and without a change of expression, until the closing bell sounded.

He never ascended to the reference, circulation or magazine rooms. Sometimes he would take the local papers home with him and read stretched out on his bed, not seeming to notice that his hands were blue with the penetrating chill that nightly drifts in from the ocean.

On Sundays he would put on a red-striped silk shirt and a blue serge suit and take a car to Golden Gate Park. There he would sit for hours in the sun, impassively watching the hundreds of picnic parties, the squirrels, or a piece of paper retreating before the breeze. Or perhaps he would walk west to the ocean, stopping for a few minutes at

each of the animal pens, and take a car home from the Cliff House.

For two years the days came and passed on in monotonous reduplication, the casual hay-fever cure circulars supplying the only touches of novelty.

Then one afternoon as he was brushing his hair, he gasped and put his hand to his throat. A sharp nausea pitched him to the floor.

Inch by inch, he dragged himself to the little table and upset it, crashing the bowl and pitcher into a dozen pieces.

His energy was spent in the effort, and he lay inert.

MRS. BUHLER consented to accompany her friend to the spiritualist's only after repeated urging, and she repented her decision as soon as she arrived there.

The fusty parlor was a north room to which the sun never penetrated, and in consequence was cold and damp. The medium, a fat, untidy woman whose movements were murmurous with the rustle of silk and the tinkle of tawdry ornaments, sat facing her with one hand pressed to forehead, and delivered mysteriously-acquired information about relatives and friends.

"Who is Dave?" she asked finally.

Mrs. Buhler hastily recalled all of her husband's and her own living relatives.

"I don't know any Dave," she said.

"Yes, yes, you know him," insisted the medium. "He's in the spirit land now. There's death right at your very door!"

She put her hand to her throat and coughed in gruesome simulation of internal strangulation.

"But I don't know any Dave," reiterated Mrs. Buhler.

She regained the street with a feeling of vast relief.

"I'll never go to one of those places again!" she asserted, as she said good-by to her friend. "It's too creepy!"

A great fog bank was rolling in majestically from the west, blotting out the sun and dripping a fine drizzle on the pavements. Drawing her coat collar closer about her neck, Mrs. Buhler plunged into the enveloping dampness and started to climb the long hill that led to her rooming-house.

Her husband's distended eyes and pale face warned her of bad news.

"Dave Scannon's dead!" he whispered hoarsely.

Dave Scannon! So that was "Dave!"

"He's been dead two or three days," continued Mr. Buhler. "I was beating a rug in the back yard a while ago when I noticed a swarm of big blue flies buzzing about his window. It flashed over me right away that I hadn't seen him for several days. I couldn't unlock his door, because his key was on the inside, so I called the coroner and a policeman, and we broke it in. He was lying between the bed and the dresser, and the bowl and pitcher lay broken on the floor, where he had knocked it over when he fell. They're taking him out now."

Mrs. Buhler hurried to the back stairway and descended to the lower hall. Two men were carrying a long wicker basket up the little flight of steps between the back entrance and the yard. She remained straining over the banister until the basket had disappeared.

The coroner had found nothing in his room but clothing, about five dollars in change, and a faded picture in a tarnished silver frame of an anemic looking woman who might have been a mother, wife or sister.

Mrs. Buhler answered his questions nervously. Yes, the dead man had been with them about two years. They knew little of him, for he was very peculiar and never talked, and wouldn't even allow the maid to come in and clean up his room. He had said though that he had no family and that his home was in Catawissa, Pennsylvania. She remembered the town because it had such an odd name.

The coroner wrote to authorities in Catawissa, who replied that they could find no traces of anyone by the name of Scannon. No more mail ever came for the man except the occasional hay-fever cure circulars.

The manager of the bakery telephoned to ask if the death notice in

the paper referred to the same Dave Scannon who had been working for him. He knew nothing of the man except that he had been very punctual in his duties until that final day when he did not appear.

SEVERAL weeks later, little Mrs. Varnes, who occupied a room at the rear of the second floor, stopped at the desk to leave her key. She hovered there for a few minutes of indecision, then impulsively leaned forward.

"Mrs. Buhler, I just want to ask you something," she said, lowering her voice. "One afternoon several weeks ago I saw some men carrying a long basket out of the back door, and I've been wondering what it was."

"Probably laundry," hazarded Mrs. Buhler.

"No, it was one of those long baskets such as the undertakers use to carry the dead in. I've often thought about it, but I couldn't figure out who could have died in this house, so I decided I would ask you. I told my husband about it, and he said I was dreaming."

"You must have been," said Mrs. Buhler.

DETECTIVE TALES

"AMERICA'S BIGGEST FICTION MAGAZINE"

Is the Favorite Periodical of

Detective Story "Fans"

FOR SALE EVERYWHERE

The
ACCUSING VOICE
A Strange Tale

By MEREDITH DAVIS

"WE, THE JURY, find the defendant, Richard Bland, guilty of murder in the first degree, in manner and form as charged.

Allen Defoe, foreman of the twelve men, listened with impassive face as the judge read away the life of the prisoner in the dock—the man whose death warrant Defoe had signed only a few minutes before. As the judge finished, Defoe glanced warily toward the prisoner. Somehow, he preferred to avoid catching his eye.

Bland, a slight, rather uninteresting type of man, stood with bowed head; Defoe now turned his gaze full upon him.

"Has the prisoner anything to say why judgment should not be pronounced?"

The judge's voice, coming after the short pause, sent a strange chill into the heart of Allen Defoe, juror. He hoped the prisoner's counsel would make the customary motions for a new trial or for time in which to file an appeal. He did neither: evidently Bland believed the verdict inescapable—or else he was out of funds.

Now the judge arose in his place, donning with nervous gesture the black cap that accompanies the most tragic moment in the performance of a court's duties. The judge seemed ill at ease in the cap. It was the first time he had worn it. The grotesque thought flitted through Defoe's mind that perhaps the judge had borrowed the cap from one of his fellow jurists for the occasion.

The almost level rays of the western sun diffused a sombre, aureate glow athwart the judge's bench, so that the dark figure of the standing man was in mystic indistinctness beyond the shaft of light from the window. A fly now and then craved the spotlight for a moment and lazily floated from the growing dusk of the room to the avenue of ebbing day, streaming in from the west. And always there was a constant turmoil of dust particles, visible only when they moved into the bright relief of the sun-shaft.

The handful of spectators stirred restlessly while the judge was making his preparations. The droning noises of approaching summer evening in a rural county-seat were smothered by the buzz of ill-hushed voices. Perhaps that was why the judge, in the midst of adjusting his headgear, rapped sharply thrice with his gavel—or, it may have been only his excess of nervousness.

Defoe thought the judge never would stop fumbling with his cap. And finally the judge lost track of the jury's verdict and had to mess through the scattered papers before him until he found it. He didn't really require it to pronounce sentence of death upon the man in the dock. Hunting it, though, delayed the

inevitable a few seconds; and Defoe wondered, since he himself was near to screaming out with impatience, how the prisoner could stand it without going suddenly mad.

"For God's sake, read the death sentence!" exclaimed Defoe under his breath, but loud enough to arouse a nod of approval from the two jurors nearest him.

A moment later the judge found his voice:

"The prisoner will face the court."

Slowly, deliberately, the prisoner stepped forward in the dock, leaning slightly against the railing and letting one hand rest upon it. He looked squarely at the judge now, although he barely could distinguish his features in the dimness.

Again the judge spoke, and this time his voice was hurried and strained:

"The sentence of the court is that the prisoner be taken, between the hours of seven a. m. and six p. m. on Tuesday, in the week beginning October 22 next, from the place of confinement to the place of execution, and there be hanged by the neck until he is dead—dead—dead! . . . And may God, in His infinite wisdom, have mercy on your soul!"

The judge sank back heavily into the safety of his chair. His hand swept up to brush his forehead and with the same motion it whisked off the detestable little black cap.

The prisoner remained staring at the judge as one who is puzzled at a strange sight. Perhaps he would have stood there untold minutes if a woman's hysterical laugh, half-choked by a sudden upraised hand, had not broken the tension of the entire room. A bailiff tiptoed to the woman, and, as if revived to duty by the same cause, a prison guard strode forward to lead the condemned man away.

Defoe could have reached out and touched Bland as he passed the jury on his way to the cell across the street. But Defoe had no desire even to look at Bland: indeed, he did not, until Bland's back was passing out of sight through the door on the other side of the jury box. Mechanically, then, Defoe filed out with the other jurors as the judge announced adjournment.

And the black cap lay forgotten on the rim of the judge's wastebasket, where the janitor found it that evening and crossed himself fervently as he timidly salvaged it from ignoble oblivion.

II.

DEFOE awoke with a shudder.

There was a moment or two, as is always the case when one arouses from heavy, dream-burdened slumber, during which Defoe could not tell where his dream ended and realities began. He blinked experimentally into the smouldering fire in the open grate before him; yes, he was conscious. For further verification of this he drew forth his watch and noted the hour. The glow from the fire was scarcely sufficient for reading the dial and Defoe leaned forward the better to see. He was still too drowsy even to reach around and turn on the electric lamp on the table behind him.

Still he was not certain whether he was yet dreaming, until—

"Don't budge, Defoe! I've got you covered!"

The Voice was close to his left ear. Its commanding acerbity quelled Defoe's impulse to spring to his feet; and as he gripped the arms of the chair tensely he managed to challenge his unseen intruder:

"Who are you? What do you want here?"

The Voice moved a little upward and back before it answered:

"You've just had a nasty dream, Defoe. Perhaps I—"

"How do you know I did!" interrupted Defoe.

"You did, though, didn't you?" the Voice insisted.

"Yes, but how did you know?" repeated Defoe.

"Never mind how," said the Voice. "I'll wager you've had the same dream pretty often in the last dozen years, too. It must be hell to have a scene like that

forever before your mind, so that you're always in dread of dreaming about it—"

"What scene?" demanded Defoe. "Are you a mind reader—a wizard—*what* are you?"

The Voice chuckled.

"None of those," it said. "As I was saying, you must be afraid, almost, to go to bed at night. *I* would be, if I thought I might dream of sending an innocent man to the gallows—"

"Stop!" Defoe fairly shouted. "Damn it all, come around here where I can see you!" and he made an instinctive move to turn about and confront his tormentor.

The firm pressure of an automatic barrel against his temple halted him.

"Don't make the mistake of turning around!" again warned the Voice incisively.

Then, in a lighter tone, it went on:

"If I were in your place, Mr. Defoe, do you know what I'd do?"

A pause. Defoe mumbled a faint "No."

"Well, I either would confess my whole knowledge of the affair—or—I'd commit suicide!"

Defoe started. It was uncanny, eerie, the way this mysterious Voice put into words the one gnawing thought that had plagued him the last dozen years of his life.

"Of course, you probably have contemplated those alternatives very often," the Voice continued. "But have you ever considered doing both? That is, did you ever think that you might confess first, thereby clearing an innocent man's name of murder, and then cheat the law yourself by committing sui—"

"For God's sake, stop that infernal suicide talk!" Defoe snapped. "In the first place, I don't know what 'affair' or what 'innocent man' you're talking about."

The Voice chuckled again. Defoe was beginning to hate that chuckle more than the feel of the automatic against his head. If the Voice kept on chuckling it might drive him to desperation, to grapple with his armed inquisitor, even though he would court certain death in doing it.

"Why, there's no need to explain the obvious," the Voice replied, its chuckle rippling through the words. "Your dream ought to tell you that. Speaking of your dream again, Mr. Defoe, reminds me of a question I often wished to ask you: Did you see Bland at all after his conviction?"

"No, of course —" Defoe's guard had been down. He was fairly tricked, so he tried to run to cover again. "What —who is this Bland you're talking about?"

"Come, come, Mr. Defoe," said the Voice. "Think over your dream a moment. Surely you remember the man in the prisoner's dock—the man who took his sentence with head up, facing the judge like a Spartan! Surely you remember Richard Bland. But did you happen to see him again after that day?"

"No," Defoe said. "Why should I have seen him after my connection with his case ended?"

"But didn't you even write him a note expressing your regret at having had to perform the duty of—"

"Certainly not!" interrupted Defoe. "Who ever heard of a foreman of a jury doing such a thing? Besides, he deserved his punishment."

The Voice was silent a moment or two before it replied:

"We'll discuss the merits of the case later . . . And you didn't even go to see him hanged?"

"What manner of man do you think I am?" exclaimed Defoe. "Of course I didn't! I wasn't even in Chicago where he was hanged."

"No?" said the Voice. "Where were you?"

"A few weeks after the trial I had to go to Europe on a long business trip. I was gone a year or so. When I returned to this country I made my home here in New York City."

"So you never even read in the newspapers about Bland—" the Voice persisted. "I don't suppose the European papers would bother with a piece of American news like that, though."

"No. I never read anything about the case after I left this country," said Defoe.

"That's odd. I'd have thought you would have followed the case through to the end," the Voice said, half-musingly. "But still, if you had, perhaps you would not be here tonight."

"Why not? What difference would it have made?"

"I don't know. That's merely my surmise," said the Voice.

A faint footstep padded through the hall outside the living-room.

"Is that you, Manuel?" Defoe asked, wondering what would happen when his Cuban valet encountered the intruder behind the chair.

The footstep halted.

"*Si, senor,*" answered the man-servant, at a respectful distance from his master's chair. "I come to see why you sit up so late, *senor.*"

Defoe laughed mirthlessly. "Well, truth to tell, Manuel, I am detained on business," and he wondered again how Manuel had escaped noticing the other presence in the room.

"You mean you fell asleep, *senor?*" asked the valet.

"I did, but some friendly caller has kept me pretty well awake the last ten minutes."

"But he has gone? And you come to bed now?" inquired the Cuban.

Defoe, after a pause, said. "Yes; I might as well go to bed, I guess."

The Voice behind the chair broke in:

"Tell your valet you will smoke another cigar before you retire."

Defoe settled down again in the chair.

"You heard, Manuel?" he asked. "You see, my visitor says he wishes me to smoke another cigar."

"But I see no visitor, *senor,*" said the Cuban.

"You heard what he said, though," Defoe insisted.

"No, *senor.* I only hear *you* say he wish you to smoke another cigar," explained the valet.

"Well, you ought to have your ears examined, Manuel. Get my box from the table and hand it to my visitor."

Manuel fumbled in the darkness until he found the box, then handed it to Defoe. The latter waved it toward the Voice behind him.

"My guest first, Manuel," he corrected.

The Cuban stood motionless. "I see no one else," he insisted.

The Voice interrupted:

"Tell him I don't care to smoke, Mr. Defoe."

"I can see no one, *senor,*" the Cuban repeated.

"But didn't you just *hear* him?" Defoe cried, leaning forward nervously.

"No, *senor,* I hear no one speak but you."

Defoe stared up at his valet, then half rose from his chair.

"Sit down, Defoe!" commanded the Voice sharply.

Defoe sank back once more.

"There!" he exclaimed to his valet. "Now tell me you didn't hear any one order me to sit down just then!"

The Cuban shook his head. "No, *senor,* I hear no one talk but you since I come in."

His master swore helplessly. "Are you trying to make a fool of me, Manuel? Do you dare stand there and tell me no one spoke to me?"

"I don't know, *senor.* I only know I hear no one speak—"

Again the Voice intruded:

"It may be that Manuel thinks you are trying to make a fool of him," it suggested.

"Do you?" Defoe asked the Cuban.

"Do I what, *senor?*" the valet asked, placidly.

"Do you think I'm trying to make a fool of you?"

"I do not say so, do I, *senor?*" the servant replied, deprecatingly.

"No, but you heard—or *did* you hear?—this visitor say it."

The Cuban, almost tearfully, denied it, becoming verbose in his protestation.

Defoe flapped his arms on the wings of his easy chair and bade his valet hush.

"Get out of here, you brown-skinned dumbbell! One of us has gone crazy tonight!"

The Cuban moved off, keeping a

suspicious eye upon his master. His retreating footstep presently was heard dying away in the hall outside.

"Well, what do you think of that damned little Cuban?" Defoe asked the Voice. "I wonder what made him lie so brazenly?"

There was no response. Defoe repeated his second question.

Still silence answered him.

"Have you gone, my friend?" Defoe asked, turning part way in his chair to test the other's watchfulness. This time no automatic punched his head and no command wilted him into the depths of his chair again.

Still doubtful of his good luck, Defoe called out once more:

"I say, stranger, have you gone?"

The only sound that greeted his ears was the faint creaking of a window in the adjoining dining-room. Defoe rose and darted to the connecting door, snapping on the electric light at the entrance to the dining-room.

The room was vacant of any soul but himself.

All he could see was the slight movement of the lace curtain at the dining-room window—and when he examined the window he found it latched.

III.

THE NEXT day Defoe went to his doctor. He wished to take stock of himself; perhaps he had been applying himself too closely to his business.

"You are badly run down, Allen," the physician said, almost before he had sat down with his patient. "You look mentally distressed."

"I am," admitted Defoe. "Working too hard, I guess."

The doctor eyed him keenly.

"Anything else troubling you?" he asked.

Defoe insisted there really was nothing at all beside his work that was affecting him. So the doctor gave the usual diagnosis: Too much nerve tension, not enough sleep, not the proper kinds of food. He ended by advising more rest and quiet.

"And avoid excitement, too," he warned. "That old heart palpitation might crop up again, you know."

It was all very well for the doctor to advise more rest and more sleep, but how was a man to sleep beneath a Damocles sword of mystery, of weird forebodings?

It was three weeks before Defoe felt that he was succeeding in obeying the doctor's instructions, partly, at least. Then—.

It happened late one night. Defoe lay in bed, his back to the lighted electric lamp on the table: he had fallen asleep, reading. Suddenly he stirred at a touch on his shoulder.

"That you, Manuel?" he asked, drowsily. "All right, put out the li—"

"No, it is not Manuel—and don't bother to turn around, Defoe!" this last sharply, as Defoe made a movement to arise in bed.

"You again!" Defoe exclaimed. "What—how did you get in?"

"That's my problem, not yours," said the Voice. "I merely dropped in again to inquire if you had thought any more of doing what I suggested."

Defoe checked an insane desire to leap out of bed and make a break for the door—anything, to escape this tormentor at his back! But he remembered the automatic. . . .

He got himself under a semblance of control before he answered:

"Your suggestions were ridiculous. Why should I have anything to confess about the Bland trial, or why should I commit suicide over it?" He even essayed a laugh meant to be derisive.

But the intruder chose to ignore Defoe's evasions. His next remark was as startling as it was illuminating:

"Did you know," said the Voice, "that of the other eleven jurors who convicted Bland, only seven are living—still?"

"No; I haven't kept track of the other eleven men," replied Defoe, annoyed subconsciously by the detachment that the Voice gave to the word "still."

"Well, I have," said the Voice. "Two of the surviving seven are in insane asylums; two of the four dead committed sui—."

Defoe could brook it no longer. He wrenched around in bed to grapple with his antagonist, forgetful, in his madness, of the automatic. But before he could free himself from the bedclothes the lamp was snapped out, and Defoe was left ignominiously tumbled in the darkness on the floor.

A chuckle from the vicinity of the bedroom door told him of his guest's departure. . . .

When morning came, after the nerve-racking night, Defoe found it hard to realize that his two experiences with the Voice really had taken place. None the less, he knew they were preying on his vitality, on his brain-functions.

Repeatedly the thought came to him that it was all a dream like his recollection of the murder trial out of which he had awakened the night of the Voice's first visit. But always against the theory of the dream he placed his remembrance of the feel of the automatic revolver; and, too, the fact that he had talked with Manuel and with the Voice at the same time argued against the dream explanation.

Left, then, was conscience—that is, if the visits of the Voice were simply hallucinations of a distracted mind. But why should conscience wait for twelve years to haunt and harass him?

The more he pondered it all, the greater became the dread of another visit from the Voice. The greater grew his fear, too, of losing his reason, as he sought to analyze the situation from every conceivable standpoint. With every new bit of theorizing, Defoe felt himself giving way more and more to melancholia such as he knew is frequently but the prelude to insanity. Was it possible, he wondered, for a man's conscience to drive him to imbecility?

Defoe finally accepted the inevitable.

"Manuel," he ordered, the second morning after the bedroom encounter with the Voice, "pack my things. We're going away."

"Away, *senor*? Where?"

Defoe's brain groped vainly for an instant, then seized upon the only chance.

"The sea—a sea voyage. My nerves . . . ."

Manuel busied himself among Defoe's clothes. "Do you need many things, *senor*? Do you go far away—Europe, perhaps?"

"No, no. Just down the coast—Old Point Comfort, I guess. Yes, that's it. A week or so of rest. Just my steamer trunk and a suitcase will do."

The day of the trip down the coast was as perfect as he could have wanted for his own satisfaction. All during the forenoon the Old Dominion steamer skirted the Jersey shore line, and Defoe sat out on deck basking in the sun and already feeling better for the salt-laden air that he breathed in deeply. In the afternoon he napped most of the time and when nightfall chilled the deck promenaders he descended with the rest to the dining-saloon.

It was while sitting in the smoking-saloon, after dinner, that Defoe first had the impression that he was being watched. A poker game was going on, lackadaisically, in one corner of the saloon; scattered in chairs and cushioned seats along the windows were perhaps a dozen or fifteen men. But, for the life of him, Defoe could not pick out any one in the room who might be watching him, now he gave his fleeting impression indulgence long enough to look about him.

Finishing a cigar, Defoe decided on a deck stroll before retiring. It was too cold and damp, with a fog beginning to gather, to permit of sitting on deck, so he paced to and fro briskly up near the fore deck beneath the pilot's tower. The nervousness of the few moments in the smoking-saloon, when he imagined himself being watched, transmuted itself into a shiver as the foggy dampness penetrated to his marrow. He lit a fresh cigar and puffed at it jerkily as if to generate bodily warmth. Presently the shiver developed into a veritable shudder such as precedes chills or certain forms of ague.

Defoe, thoroughly miserable and alarmed now at the fear of sickness on board ship, chafed his cheeks with his hands and, on his way to the entrance

to the stateroom, he flailed his arms about himself to stem the onrush of the chill. Once inside the passageway of the staterooms, however, he felt warmer, and by the time he reached his stateroom door the chill had subsided almost completely.

He was still uncomfortably cold, though, as he opened the door. With one hand he unbuttoned his overcoat and with the other he reached gropingly for the electric light button on the wall. He fumbled around for it a few seconds, then swore softly in vexation because he had not noticed by daylight just where it was located.

Groping with both hands, now, he stumbled around the none-too-commodious room, feeling for the push button on the wall. He paused once and took inventory of his pockets and cursed his luck for lack of another match.

Then he went to hunting in the dark again—until his hand came full against a living body. . . .

IV.

THE BODY stirred, eluding Defoe's contact.

Defoe fell to quaking once more, but it was not the trembling of the chill this time. He opened his mouth to challenge the intruder, and all he could do was swallow and gag at the words that stuck in his throat.

A pressure against the pit of his stomach—a firm shove of a hand upon his shoulder—and Defoe found himself stepping backward until it seemed he must have walked the length of the ship. But of course he hadn't—he hadn't even left the stateroom—and suddenly he was tumbled on to the edge of the berth, the pressure against his abdomen increasing.

A vague nausea gripped him. He clutched at his abdomen and his fingers wrapped themselves around the barrel of an automatic pistol. The pressure against his body became unbearable, piercing. . . . Defoe crumpled back into the berth and the convulsive effort restored his speech.

"What the hell are you doing?" he exploded. "Get out of here! What are you trying to do—stab me with a pistol?"

The incongruity of his question aroused a titter of amusement from the invisible presence.

"No, I only wished to make sure you weren't trying to get away."

That Voice again!—*here!* Defoe cringed in a sort of abject fear.

"What are you—*who are you?*" Defoe struggled to keep his voice steady, struggled, indeed, to keep his reason from flying out of balance and shattering into a thousand pieces of driveling idiocy.

"Call me anything you care to," replied the Voice in the dark.

"I don't believe you are—*anything* at all! I think you are all a dream, a nightmare, a damnable hallucination that I can't get rid of! To hell with you! I'm going to go down to the smoking-room and—smoke you out of my mind! I'm going to stay in the light from now on, day and night, until I get over this morbid dreaming!"

Defoe really thought he meant it all, until the pressure against his stomach made him doubt his courage and defiance.

Perhaps it was the nausea—maybe seasickness; he never had thought of that!—that was griping at his vitals like the insistent pressure of a steel-barreled weapon.

"Sit down, Mr. Defoe!" commanded the Voice. "I've got something to say to you."

"To hell with you!" Defoe repeated, almost hysterically now. His hands clutched at the pressure again—and once more the pistol barrel sent him squirming back into the recesses of the berth.

"I want to talk to you some more about the Bland case," went on the Voice, unperturbed by the other's outburst. "When are you going to confess?"

"Confess?" Defoe paried. "Confess what?"

"Confess that you knew Bland was innocent when you convicted him," said the Voice.

"But I didn't." It was like wrestling with one's conscience, Defoe thought, this interminable denying of Bland's innocence. He was wearying of it all; his mind was revolting at the repeated "third degree" of this mysterious Voice. Soon, he feared, his brain would refuse to function.

"But you've said you did," the Voice insisted.

"When? It's a lie!" exclaimed Defoe.

The Voice chuckled, sending a shudder through the man crouching in the corner of the berth.

"You probably don't know, Mr. Defoe, that for a number of years you have had the treacherous habit of talking in your sleep—talking volubly, excitedly, sometimes almost reconstructing entire incidents in your talk for the benefit of anyone who might happen to be listening."

"Well?" asked Defoe.

"Simply this: Manuel has overheard enough to—"

"Manuel? broke in Defoe. "What's he got to do with it!"

"I forgot to tell you," the Voice apologized. "The Cuban is my confederate—former member of the Secret Police of Havana, you know. I saved his life during the Spanish war and—well, he's paying back an old debt, as he calls it. He let me in and out of your house, and tipped me off about this trip. You see, Manuel had overheard you say, in your sleep, that you convicted an innocent man of murder. So I knew your conscience—"

"Are you trying to be my conscience? Are you trying to plague me into confessing? Are you—"

"No," answered the Voice, "unless you choose to call me your conscience. I'm willing. You seem to be in need of one. Do you know, Mr. Defoe," and the Voice took on a more affable tone, "you have been fearfully distracted the last few weeks or months. You need a rest—a *long* rest!"

Defoe was silent, hunched in the retreat of the berth. He had no fight left in him. Presently he fell to whimpering quietly, as a child does when it is punished beyond endurance and is too frightened to cry. The Voice, it seemed, missed the old combativeness, gone so quickly after Defoe's late outburst, so it prodded the hunted man with its chief weapon—not its pistol, but its chuckle. This time it chuckled devilishly, aggravatingly, and it rasped against the tender sensibilities of the sniveling Defoe like salt in an open wound.

Then something broke what little bonds of restraint remained in Defoe. He sprang, catlike, to the outer edge of the berth and lunged for the arm that held the pistol. In the darkness his head struck the cross-support of the berth above and he slumped forward, half dazed by the blow.

Again the chuckle sounded in his ears, now ringing with the stunning impact; and again Defoe lurched forward, only to fall dizzily to the floor. He clambered clumsily to his feet, gripping the berth for a momentary prop.

Soon his head began to clear. He was assembling out of the maze of ache and buzzing in his ears and brain some sort of coherent idea of where he was and what had been happening.

"Now I know what it all means!" he burst forth presently. "You—you sneaking, cackling little conscience, get out of here! I'm going to cheat you if I have to become a drunkard or a dope fiend the rest of my life! I'm not going to let a conscience, or a voice or a chuckle, drive me to insanity—or to confessing—or to suicide!"

Defoe was steady enough now, supporting himself against the upper berth. His voice grew more strident.

"No, I'm not going to let my conscience get the best of me! You thought you could keep after me endlessly, but I'll get rid of you. I'm never going to be bothered with you or your voice again! Never! Now get out of here! Get out of here, I say!"

The chuckle—a croaking, sepulchral chuckle it was now—answered him out of the darkness.

"You might tell me, before I go, if you know who really did kill the man Bland was convicted of murdering,"

said the Voice. "I'm curious enough to wish to know his name." And the Voice chuckled once more.

"Damn that cackle! I'll tell you, if you choke off that infernal cackling! I'll tell you—*yes! I* can tell you, because *I did it! I* committed that murder, you understand? *I* did it! Now cackle all you want to! And I convicted Bland of it! Cackle, you damned little shriveled conscience! *Ho, ho, ho-ho-ho!* I think it's my turn—to—cackle—now!"

The words of the hysterical man rose to a maudlin scream that reverberated piercingly in the little stateroom.

"Now get out of here for good!" the raving Defoe shouted, recovering coherence of speech after a time. "Get out—before—I—"

A blinding glare of light came as Defoe reached for the door. The intruder had found the push button.

Defoe stared—then toppled to the floor.

"B l a n d! *B l a n d! You! It's you. . . .*"

And before the stranger that was Bland passed from the room he felt again of the heart of the craven hulk at his feet. The doctor had been right: The tumult in the breast of the twelfth juror had been too much.

If only Defoe had known that the Governor had pardoned Bland, his secret might have been safe forever.

A New Story of Horror

By ANTHONY M. RUD

"The Square of Canvas"

In the April Issue of

WEIRD TALES

Walter Scott Story offers a new conclusion to Edgar Allen Poe's "Cask of Amontillado"

The Sequel

SOBERED on the instant—the padlock had clicked when Montresor passed the chain about my waist and thus fastened me to the wall—I stood upright in the little dungeon, the blood running cold in my veins.

With maniacal laughter, he withdrew from the niche, whipped a trowel from under his robe and began to wall up the narrow opening. I knew it was not a joke, a drunken jest. I saw that his drunkenness had fallen from him. The dying flambeau fell from my nerveless hand and cast a fitful bloody glow upon the whitened, dripping walls. I shook the chain frenziedly.

"For God's sake, Montresor!" I cried.

He replied with a horrible, mocking laugh, and, like a devil from hell, lifted his voice with mine to show that it was idle to call for help.

I had always distrusted Montresor. I knew him to be a serpent. He feared me and was jealous of my person and attainments. In spite of all his fawning and his smiles, I knew he hated me deeply for the injuries I had heaped upon him and for the open insults I had added to them. And yet I swear he had never in the slightest suspected that it was not Giovanna, the tenor, who was successful with his wife, but *I!*

"Fortunato!" he called, and his hoarse tone echoed in a ghastly way through the gloomy catacombs of his ancestors and re-echoed along the winding crypt.

I made no reply. Cold beads of fear started from my brow as I strained against the chain and listened to the soft thud of the stones he was building into the opening to make my tomb and the accompanying tinkle of his trowel. Even then, I admired, perforce, the cleverness with which he had secured his revenge.

It was the night of the carnival. He had found me in the streets, dazed with wine, and, pretending that he wanted my judgment on a cask of sherry, had lured my staggering feet into the gloomy passages under his *palazzo*. And he had brought me into this narrow niche in the castle walls to entomb me alive where no one would ever find me. It was *clever!*

My memory fails me now, but I doubt not I cried out many times for pity and mercy; and I take no shame in thinking this may have been so. I recall his words and his horrible mouthings as he worked with more haste and zeal than skill.

But I was a brave man always. I did not yield myself to fate. It was unthinkable. I, *Fortunato*, to die walled in by Montresor! I cursed him and his line. I wrenched at the chain with ferocious strength, more eager to have

him by the throat than to be free to live. I called upon all the saints and particularly to my patron saint. You shall see that I was not unheard.

The wall grew high—to his breast—and in the light of his flambeau set somewhere in the wall outside I could see Montresor's sweating face as he labored with the stones.

Suddenly he thrust his torch through the opening, now no larger than his head—and to deceive him I prostrated myself upon the floor and laughed the laugh of a dying man.

I heard the *thud* of another stone, and looked up quickly. My flambeau had died out: Montresor's had disappeared. And there was no opening! I was in a tomb of stone!

Absolute darkness surrounded me, and the walls seemed to press in upon me like icy blankets. And silence as absolute as the darkness reigned.

I leaped to my feet. Silence! Silence, absolute silence, save for my own labored breathing. Maria! Suppose the mortar hardened ere I could throw my weight against the poor wall he had built. Then I were lost!

I called out aloud to my holy saint. Lucky it was that I had the bodily strength of two. I strained upon the chain wildly; I seized it in my hands and tore at it with savage determination. I would not die thus! In desperation, frantic with rage and fear, I made one last violent, prodigious effort to free myself, with strength enough to make the palazzo tremble, and in that last great effort the staples of the chain tore loose from the half-rotten stone in which they were fastened.

Hot tears of joy welled in my eyes. I vowed a hundred candles to the Virgin: but I could not then take time to give thanks.

Throwing myself upon the wall Montresor had just reared, my feet desperately braced on the rough floor, I fought for liberty like a tiger. Heavens! It *gave!*—the wall gave!

It yielded like a stiff canvas against the push of a hand, gave slowly, but surely—*yielded* outward, then went rumbling down! I thrust myself through the jagged opening into the catacombs. I was free!

What joy if Montresor had been there, even though he wore his rapier and I had but my poinard!

It was very dark, and yet I could see a gleam of light in the direction from which we had come. Montresor crazed with the thought of sweet revenge, I drunk with wine. I paused and thought. Should I find him in the streets in this gay time and slay him. No! I laughed insanely, yet clearly. No! There was a better thing to do.

With haste and no mean skill, I builded up the wall anew, closing the opening of what might have been my tomb—had I been a weak man—and against this new wall erected a rampart of old bones; *then*, thrusting the dangling ends of the chain within my doublet, began to retrace my feet toward freedom.

I struck my foot against some small, soft object, and halted with a start. I leaned over. I had kicked against Montresor's mask, and I put it over my face.

I knew that all of his servants were away to enjoy the carnival, but it would do no harm to wear this mask—and it served my purpose. I passed through the crypt and walked back swiftly and steadily through the range of low arches through which I had *come* staggering to an awful doom.

Soon I was above in my false friend's rich suites in the cheerful glow of many lights. But all was quiet. No one stirred. I was alone—safe!

I went light-footed through the deserted house—I could hear the shouts and laughter of the merry people in the street—until I came to the passage leading to the plaza.

There I stopped, with the blood jumping through my veins, like wildfire. In this hall, in the corner upon a low settee, lay Montresor, sprawling in a heavy stupor, as drunk with wine as I had been when I had trustfully entered within his doors. I paused over his body. Within my bosom was the dag-

ger with, which I never part. And yet I let him lie there unharmed.

When I elbowed my way, masked, through the square, it was twelve o'clock. I was in time to keep my appointment with his wife! I laughed. What a jest!

And Montressor's wife was awaiting me in the usual place. Such a beautiful woman! I really loved her—and I hoped *he* did.

I was as clever as I was brave—I was, indeed, an exceedingly clever man. I had seen my creditors pressing and all things turning toward ruin, and that was why I had converted everything possible into gold and precious stones.

That night I crept unseen into my own house, from which my servants, like Montresor's, had stolen away to enjoy the carnival, and, securing all the wealth I had secreted, was up and away, my chain stricken off by an obscure armorer. I have no doubt that my body-servant was executed for the theft of my fortune—as indeed he should have been for watching my belongings so poorly. But I know not.

Then we left the city while the streets were still crowded and gay—Montresor's wife and I—and went to England, where we have lived a long life very happily.

Years ago I heard a vague rumor that Montresor believed his beautiful wife had gone away with Giovanna, the tenor, who disappeared at about that time. But it was not so. As for Lady Fortunato—she may have guessed the truth.

And Montresor will believe until he dies that my bones lie crumbling in the little walled-in dungeon below his palazzo.

COMING!

"The Bodymaster"

A Hair-raising Novelette

by HAROLD WARD

Will Be Published Complete

In the Next Issue of

WEIRD TALES

The Weaving Shadows

By W. H. HOLMES

CHET BURKE was lazily reclining in his favorite easy chair, absorbed in a rare book on alchemy and black magic, when his sister answered a summons at the door.

In addition to managing the household affairs of the apartment in which she and Burke lived alone, her duties also consisted in scrutinizing the many visitors. Most of them could be persuaded to call at the book stall, which Burke conducted when not devoted to some criminal mystery that held him until it was solved. Others, whose cases were urgent, were admitted to the apartment, thus infringing on Burke's only recreation, reading and study.

The visitors were Chief Rhyne, a friend of Burke's, of the Rhyne Detective Agency, and a stranger.

Burke laid aside his book and greeted the callers with a friendly nod. Rhyne, a portly, flushed man, settled his sturdy body into a convenient chair. The stranger an intelligent-looking man, appeared ill at ease. He stood self-consciously beside Rhyne, absently running the brim of his soft hat through browned, muscular-looking fingers.

"Burke," grunted Rhyne heavily, "meet Mr. Hayden. He is bothered about a very mysterious affair. It has worked on his nerves until he has decided to consult an expert. It's beyond me, so I brought him around to you."

Rhyne sighed with relief, and eased back in his chair.

Hayden stuck out a rough, calloused hand to Burke. His bronzed face flushed slightly at Rhyne's statement.

"I am more concerned," he said, in a suprisingly agreeable voice, "about how you will receive what I have to relate. I can hardly believe yet that the things exist, although I have seen them three nights in succession."

He shook his head in doubt, and sat down mechanically in the chair that Burke drew up.

While Hayden was gathering his thoughts, Burke quietly sized him up. Hayden appeared to be a man of about forty-five. His face was deeply tanned, and his appearance suggested many hours spent out of doors. Burke noted at once his trait of eying one direct from warm brown eyes. He was garbed quietly, and evidently in his best. His dark suit was set off by square-toed shoes, above which glared white socks. A low, soft, white collar, with a black string tie, completed his obviously habitual concession to dress. On the whole, Hayden struck the detective as a wholesome type of the practical mechanic.

"Now, Mr. Hayden," said Burke musingly, his eyes half closed and vacant,

"state your case fully. We will try not to interrupt you."

The detective lounged down in his chair, his heavy lips slightly drooping, and his long legs crossed indolently in front of him. His eyes had their customary vague stare through the tortoise-shell glasses that veiled them.

Hayden drew a long breath, then exhaled it in a long sigh. With a brisk straightening of his shoulders he said:

"I am a carpenter. Until recently, or, to be exact, until four days ago, I lived in New Orleans. I am a bachelor, and it doesn't make much difference to me where I live, so long as I can find work at my trade. Therefore I came up here, to Sunken Mine, in the Highlands of the Hudson, to live with a widowed sister and her daughter."

He paused, and his eyes grew reflective. For a moment he was evidently measuring his words. With a quick intake of his breath, he resumed:

"My sister lives in an aged, pre-Revolutionary house, deep in the mountains. It is a lonely place, and a secluded dwelling. At one time it was probably a restful appearing country farmhouse. Today it is a weathered frame building, set in a grove of dead and whitened chestnut trees.

"The house is a one-story-and-attic affair, with rough stone fireplaces at the side, and a long sloping roof that pitches low at the rear. Owing to its age and the condition of the place, it is a dreary spot for one used to the city. My sister affects ancient, antique furnishings, which does not lessen the impression of living in the past. As soon as I crossed the door-sill I was affected by this vague, misty remembrance of being there before.

"It may strike you as strange that my sister picked out a place of this type to spend the remainder of her days. But she had, to her and her daughter, good reasons. Both she and my niece are earnest spiritualists. Both receive messages, and are, in truth, sincere mediums. For some reason, my sister claims that the atmosphere of the old dwelling helps them to materialize those that have gone before. I myself have considerable faith in those things, although I treat it in a practical manner. I only believe what I actually see. What I am about to relate, I have both seen and *felt*."

Hayden paused for an instant to stare earnestly at Burke. The detective nodded to him to continue.

"I have read deeply," went on Hayden, and in my spare time I could be called a bookworm. I work at my trade, but live much in the past, especially in books. For this reason, I could be sympathetic to my sister's idea of living close to her life's hobby, or her "mission," as she calls it.

"There is one more reason why my sister purchased the place, six weeks ago. It was the original settling place of the family, before the Revolution. As the result of a family tragedy, some hundred years or more ago, the place passed into other hands. Few new buildings are constructed in that sparsely settled, unfertile section, and most of the houses have stood for generations. Consequently, the old Hayden house was never disturbed. At the time it came back into the family it was vacant and for sale.

"They had been living there about two months when I came there to live with them. The room I occupied Sunday night is on the second floor. It is a semi-attic room, lit by one window. Before I came, the room was occupied by my niece. On my arrival it was arranged for me, and the girl and her mother occupied a bedroom downstairs.

"It was around eleven-thirty Sunday night when I went to bed, and was soon asleep. I awoke with the feeling that something was stifling me. It was as if I had a heavy cold and found difficulty in breathing. This peculiar sensation of suffocation finally caused me to rouse into complete wakefulness. The strange smothering seemed to ease as I got more fully awake. Unable to fall asleep again, I lay looking out of the window at the stars. The bed is at the end of the room, and the window was in direct sight.

"The house was intensely still. I noticed this in particular, as I remarked

the absence of the city noises I had been used to. I can't recollect that there was so much as an insect stirring. My own breathing, as in imagination I still struggled for breath, was the only sound. It appeared to fill the room with a hoarse, rasping murmur. I likened myself to a dying man, gasping his last breath. This fancy, to one of my usual practical trend, was perplexing to myself. Still, in the few moments before the things appeared, my thoughts apparently dwelt on uncanny ideas. At the same time I was conscious of a queer, tingling of my body.

"As I lay staring at the faint light of the sky, I slowly became conscious of a singular illusion, or, as I am at times led to believe, a startling visitation. The dark shadows of the room appeared to be dancing rapidly before my eyes. They were streaming in long wreaths, coiling in fantastic spirals, and wafting through the room in wide, level films of blackness.

"I don't know how I could see this, but it was plainly visible. Yet the room, except for the faint light that came from the clear, moonless sky, was in fairly deep darkness. It seemed that the moving shadows that formed before my eyes were only discernible because of their greater density. I can only liken this uncanny movement of the shadows to swaying and floating clouds of tobacco smoke, when one is smoking slowly and freely.

"For some moments I watched the movements of the shadows. Then I observed that they were forming in a more stable order. They were now lying in long, round coils of blackness, horizontally across the room, and twisting rapidly. For several moments they lay motionless, except for their rapid turning, then, as if stirred by a firm direct breeze, they undulated toward the head of the stairs. This drift brought several horizontal layers into contact. At the moment of their touching, the shadows seemed to weave into huge rolls, which streamed from sight rapidly down the stairs. The room now appeared to grow lighter, and the air clearer. Also, all sensation of smothering had left me.

"I lay there quietly after the disappearance of the shadows, pondering over the strange affair. So far, I was fairly calm, except for the wonderment of the thing. The return of the shadows was the cause of my fears and suspense as to the final outcome.

"My eyes were gazing absently out of the window, as I had not turned my eyes from the stairs after the black rolls had streamed down them. Slowly, so slowly that it scarcely seemed to move, I saw a black, humanlike form rise above the sill of the window. I could just see the top of it as it mounted the stairs. I watched it with a keen realization that it had something to do with the shadows.

"Very slowly, almost imperceptibly, the round, headlike shape continued to rise. I could now see it plainly, outlined against the lighter sky. The shape now rose to its full height. It had the form of a shapeless human figure. That is, I could distinguish the smaller head shadow above, and what would answer for a body, if one were at all imaginative. The thing passed beyond the window and drifted into the darkness at the end of the room. Yet, I could still make out its vague form by its greater blackness.

"My eyes went back to the window. Another figure was slowly blocking the cheerful light of the sky. Again a black form emerged to its full height. It joined the first. I am not a coward. I lay quiet, wondering what the thing presaged.

"The two figures advanced to the center of the room. They were now fairly discernible. One of them walked to an old-fashioned dresser at one side of the room, stood there a moment, then joined the other figure. With this, both shapes turned and passed down the stairs.

"As they were disappearing, I called. The forms were so clear, and I was by this time so far from sleep, that my mind hit on a logical reason to explain the thing. It was evidently my sister

and my niece. They had wanted something from the dresser, and, not wishing to disturb me, had come up quietly, got what they wanted, and then returned to their room.

"Getting no answer to my call, I sprang out of bed to convince myself of the truth of my belief. I went downstairs, and to their room. Both were in bed and fast asleep. I awoke them. Neither one had been up since retiring. I did not tell them of the black forms, but made some excuse for awakening them. The remainder of the night I spent in the kitchen, sleeping in a large rocking chair."

Hayden paused and stared at Burke.

"GO ON," said Burke shortly. "This would not have brought you to me." Hayden shook his head.

"No," he said, "it was what came after. This same night, as I arose from the bed, following the disappearance of the two forms down the stairway, I had reached the center of the room when I became conscious of standing in something that was wet to my feet. I was barefooted, and when I looked at my feet I found them soiled with blood.

"Naturally I thought that I had cut myself; but a close examination revealed no cut or bruise of any sort. I lit a lamp and went back upstairs. My first glance was at the spot where I had first felt the wetness. A glance revealed the cause. Directly in the center of the bare board floor was a large pool of fresh blood. It was slowly spreading out over the floor, and sinking into the dry wood. I cleaned it up as much as possible, and then searched the room thoroughly. There was absolutely nothing that I could find that would explain the blood.

"The next morning, both my sister and my niece complained of feeling languid and fagged. My niece, a very white, frail girl, was even more colorless than usual, and her mother, noticeable for her deep intense eyes and the black rings that encircle them, seemed listless and indifferent to everything. Noting this, I scrubbed up the bloodstains before they made up the room, and said nothing of what I had seen.

"Things were normal until Monday night. Again, about the same hour, I was awakened by a smothering sensation. Once more I heard my own breathing as I gasped for air. As I got more fully awake, I found that the smothering sensation grew more intense. I sat up in bed, crouched over like one suffering with the asthma, and striving to fill my lungs with air. But this did not relieve my distress.

"Unconsciously, my eyes were fixed across the dark room. Again occurred the weaving of the shadows. Panting, stifling, and seemingly unable to arouse myself enough to get out of bed, I watched the repetition of the scene of the previous night. Once the horizontal streams of shadows were formed, my breathing became more normal, and I seemed to regain the power to move and think clearly.

"I then deliberately waited to see the finish of the affair. The banks of twisting shadows disappeared down the stairway, and the two figures repeated their previous trip. As soon as they had descended past the window, I sprang from bed and lit my lamp. My eyes went at once to the floor. The pool of fresh blood was there for the second time. I let it lay and tiptoed down stairs, and to the women's room. Both were in a sound sleep, but I was struck at once by the haggardness of their features.

"I did not awake them. Getting a basin and water, I returned upstairs. I again scrubbed up the floor, this time with much care, as the stain had now gone deep into the aged boards. Leaving the lamp lit, I went back to bed. Finally I fell asleep. Nothing occurred during the remainder of the night.

"The morning after this second visitation," resumed Hayden, "I again remarked the extreme pallor of my niece and the haggard, gaunt face of her mother. Still, I remained silent, determined to solve the riddle for myself.

"Last night I retired early, and I took several precautions. First, I secured an electric flashlight. Next, I powdered the stairs with flour. I also sprinkled the floor on the attic room. I now had a

trap that no human being, or any mechanical figure, could tread over without leaving a trace. This done, I blew out the lamp and went to bed.

"I lay awake for a matter of two or three hours. I was determined to stay awake until the shadows commenced to form, or until I began to feel the smothering sensation. In this way, I would have a grasp on it from beginning to end. But in spite of my resolution, I fell asleep.

"I was again awakened by an uncanny feeling. Firm hands, or, rather, some peculiar force, seemed to hold my arms down on the bed. I sought to draw up my legs in order to slip out of bed, but found them held by an unyielding power. Finally, I discovered that I was unable to move any part of my body. I was certainly awake, yet I was as helpless as a person in a nightmare, who fancies that his body is totally paralyzed.

"Forced to lay motionless, I saw the black shadows stream from various parts of the room. This time they formed over my bed. I could feel them drift across my face, spinning, waving, and twisting and contorting. It was an unearthly feeling, lying there helpless to avert anything that might happen. There is nothing I can describe that would be similar to the feeling of those black forms, ceaselessly in motion. It might be likened to some invisible force that presses on one, or to a heavy fog that a person seems to feel in a material manner, with a strong impression of its dampness and chill.

"This helplessness and the weaving of the shadows went on for perhaps five minutes. Then, as the twisting rolls started to stream down the stairs, I could feel my body regaining its power. With the disappearance of the materializing forms, I became physically and mentally myself again.

"I then got the electric torch in my hand, ready to flash it at the proper moment. The figures rose above the stair, and I directed the bulb of the light toward them. I waited until they advanced to the center of the room, then I threw on the light."

HAYDEN wiped his mouth with a trembling hand. His lips were dry, and his face flushed.

Then, with a slight shudder, he went on:

"At the instant of the flash, the darkness of the figures was gone. Instead, I saw two faces. They were inhuman, horrible, and impossible to describe. They leered at me with their shadowy, devilish faces, scarcely discernible in the glow of the torch. They seemed to be mocking me. They were corpse-looking and repulsive, but the eyes were terrible. They were full and real, and glowing, with a hellish, vengeful fire. But with all the horribleness of the faces, it was not they that held me motionless.

"It was at that moment that I discovered the source of the blood. It was dripping out of the air, and falling in a steady patter. I glanced up at the ceiling, but it was firm and unbroken. While I watched—it was scarcely a second—the drops seemed to form in the air above the floor. They were rapidly ceasing when my nerves gave way for the moment, and I let out an involuntary yell. With the cry, the dripping blood suddenly ceased and the faces vanished.

"This brought me to my senses. I sprang from bed, determined to see the thing through. My first act was to scan my trap. I followed the flour down the stairs, but it lay in a white, unbroken dust, as I had scattered it. That night, also, I looked in on the women. Both were sound asleep. But I was deeply shocked by their distorted faces. Shaken both mentally and bodily, I once more spent the rest of the night in the kitchen rocker.

"And now I want some one to go up there with me, examine the house, and spend the night in the room. I am troubled, nervous, and frightened: both for myself and for those with whom I live."

"I will go there with you," replied Burke evenly, "and I think the two of us should accomplish something. We can probably handle two shadowy forms."

Hayden smiled dolfully.

"They handled me last night," he said ruefully. "I'm a pretty strong man, but something held me as helpless as a baby."

BURKE alighted at a lonely way-station, standing on a strip of land between a wide marsh and the Hudson.

The marsh ran to the foot of the mountains, and lay sear and rippling in the September breeze. Hayden had stated that the dwelling stood back in the hills, a distance of some five miles. On Burke's suggestion, they started to walk. Burke wanted to study the country, and, incidently, study his companion.

The country he found to be sparsely settled. The road wound up through forest-clad rocky hills. The dwelling stood beside a wide stretch of woods, with cleared fields to the north.

Burke scanned the dwelling as he approached it, and found it to be the usual type of farm house of a century ago, buried among dead trees.

The interior of the house was in keeping with the exterior. Oval frames held old prints, horse-hair upholstered, massive dark furniture contrasted with tables and stands covered with white marble tops, the chairs squatted grimly in the quiet rooms and rested on dull rag carpets. The woman and her daughter struck Burke like beings transported from the misty past.

The mother was a tall, spare woman, with heavy black rings about the eyes. The eyes, black and dreamy, held Burke with a steady, unwinking stare. The daughter was the opposite of her dark, sallow mother. She seemed a lifeless, colorless sprite, seemingly alive by the power and vigor of her mere intense mother. She was about twenty years of age, although her chalky face, and thin, bloodless hands, together with her slight frame and indolent movements, seemed to signify an elder age, or some wasting disease. Both were of the dreaming, musing type, speaking softly and briefly, and moving silently about the quiet house, and both were garbed in dresses of white material.

Burke's first act was to visit the room upstairs. There was nothing to warrant his attention except the stained floor. He ripped up several splinters and put them in his pocket. He then announced his intention of visiting the nearest town, several miles to the south.

Hayden asked no questions, evidently placing the affair entirely in Burke's hands. He remarked that he would "walk down a ways" with the detective, and await his return.

The two women were still unaware of Burke's vocation, and accepted without comment Hayden's statement that Burke was a friend that was to remain over night.

AS SOON as Burke arrived in town, he went at once to the Chief of Police. Here he inquired for some one qualified to make an examination of the blood-stained splinters. He was directed to a doctor who maintained a laboratory. The latter, after a lengthy analysis, confessed himself puzzled. Something was missing in the composition. He could not account for the peculiar results he obtained. It was human blood—and yet it was not.

Burke returned to the Chief of Police and inquired about the Haydens. The Chief was unable to give Burke any satisfaction, but directed him to an old settler in the vicinity who could probably furnish the desired information.

Burke found the family without trouble. They were willing to talk, but they knew very little about the Haydens—though a good deal about the house.

Over a hundred years before, they said, a widow and her niece had lived in the then new dwelling. The place, a flourishing farm, which had since been cut up and sold off, was managed by the woman's step-brother. The family were more or less secluded, and seldom seen.

In the course of weeks it was noticed that no one had seen the two women. The brother was at the house alone, and refused to talk. This led to an investigation. No trace of the women was found. The brother was never brought to trial, continued to live on the place until he died of old age, and had

prospered. His heirs had taken over the place, and it had been gradually dissipated, until only the house and an acre or so of land remained.

Burke listened politely, then, thanking the old couple, returned to the Hayden house. Hayden was awaiting him.

That evening, Burke sat beside the open fireplace, listening to the low, earnest conversation of the others. The woman and her daughter he observed closely. They seemed to be possessed of some restless emotion that caused them to wander aimlessly around. On the contrary, Hayden appeared to be sluggish and incapable of extended speech. This struck Burke as queer, as he had remarked the vivid description Hayden had given of the attic room.

At ten o'clock the women announced their intention of retiring. Bidding the two men good-night, they withdrew to their rooms. Burke and Hayden, the latter almost stupid and listless in his movements, went up the narrow stairs to the room above.

Both lay on the bed fully robed. Burke saw Hayden take a revolver from his pocket and shove it under his pillow.

"What shall we do?" asked Hayden heavily, seemingly unconscious of anything around him and staring vacantly at the ceiling.

"Well," replied Burke quietly, "first, we will blow out the lamp."

He got out of bed and put out the light. Returning, he crawled on the further side of Hayden, leaving Hayden on the outside. Burke had no desire to be on the firing side of the revolver in the event that Hayden should start shooting.

The detective lay for an hour, pondering over the strange case. Finally he spoke to Hayden. The latter did not reply. He was apparently fast asleep. Yet, as Burke listened closely, he could discern no signs of the latter's breathing.

Burke now experienced a singular emotion aroused by the intense silence of the room. The longer he lay the more impressive it became. Downstairs he heard the low chime of a clock. It struck eleven. The minutes lagged along in the forbidding silence.

The clock chimed the half hour. Fifteen more minutes passed. Hayden, breathing heavily now, commenced to move. Burke half arose on his elbow and listened. Hayden was muttering in his sleep.

Burke eyed the dark shadows of the room with keen eyes. Nothing met his gaze. He glanced to the window. Nothing there. Hayden was suffering tortures in his struggle for breath.

The detective was on the point of shaking him, when, with a heavy, prolonged gasp, Hayden sat up. Burke sensed the horror of the man, yet he remained motionless. His eyes were fixed on the dark, silent room, wandering frequently to the window.

Nothing unusual was to be seen, and he watched the vague form of his bedmate. The latter was now rigid, struggling with the weight that oppressed his lungs, and apparently staring off into the room. Then, to Burke's amazement, Hayden started to breathe normally.

"Burke," he whispered hoarsely, "did you see it? Did you see them pass down the stairs?"

"Eh?" grunted Burke sleepily.

"My God!" muttered Hayden, "you were to watch, and you fall asleep. They have gone down the stairs. They'll come back again in four or five minutes. Watch!"

Burke made no reply. He, with his wide-awake companion, was staring intently at the window. Suddenly he felt Hayden stiffen.

"The head is just coming up the stairs!" whispered Hayden.

Burke felt the movement of Hayden's arm as it slid under the pillow. Then came the blinding flash of the revolver and its roar. Twice Hayden pulled the trigger. By that time Burke had flashed on his electric torch. The room was empty. Burke glanced at the floor. No blood was visible.

Hayden was panting and rocking back and forth.

"I feel awful queer," he groaned. "Something is dragging me."

Mechanically he arose from the bed and stumbled onto the floor.

"It tells me to kill. *Kill!*" he mumbled. "Kill with my revolver. Kill—who shall I kill?"

Burke silently followed the plodding form of the other. With measured steps Hayden stalked to the stairs and passed down, with Burke close behind.

Hayden led the way directly to the room of his sister and niece. Without hesitating, his fingers grasping a loaded "Billy," Burke trailed close and waited for the moment when he should be needed.

Hayden appeared unconscious of the light furnished by Burke's torch, nor did he once turn on the short journey. Reaching the side of the bed in which the women were sleeping, he paused and stared rigidly down.

Burke joined him. His light was now on the two women. He was struck by the horrible contortions of the faces, seemingly drawn in agony.

With a sudden premonition, he bent down and felt the motionless forms. The girl's hand was limp and lifeless. He felt the pulse of the older woman.

Both were dead!

THE detective turned to Hayden. He was staring down, dry-eyed.

"I see," he said stupidly, "both dead. Kill, *kill*—who was I to kill? Not them. They're dead. Something still tells me to kill!" He sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Burke lit a lamp that stood on a heavy dresser and put out the torch. He stood looking down at the two women. He then noted that the room was growing shadowy. He glanced at the lamp. It was full of oil and the wick seemed to be burning freely, yet the light continued to lower.

Burke again glanced at the two women. Slowly, almost invisibly, he fancied that the agonized features were changing to the repose of death.

Hayden arose and came to the detective's side. He was muttering and softly moaning. Burke watched him.

Hayden, with a sudden start, looked across the room.

"They're coming back!" he mumbled, "weaving and twisting."

His eyes moved slowly from the opposite side of the room as if he were following some moving object. They came to rest on the women's faces.

"Streaming down their mouths!" he muttered. "They're sucking in the twisting rolls. *They're coming to life!*"

Burke glanced at the women. In the dim light he could have sworn that he saw traces of returning life. At that moment there came a crashing report at his side and a blinding flash.

With that, the light flared up bright, and the dead faces were revealed. Burke whirled around.

Hayden was sinking to the floor, a bullet hole in his head, from which the blood was slowly starting to emerge. Burke sank beside the man and lifted his head.

Slowly the heavy form relaxed. Hayden opened his eyes to stare with bewilderment at the detective.

In another moment he was dead.

Burke placed the body on the floor and went to the bed. Once again he endeavored to find a trace of pulse in the still forms. Both were lifeless. He fancied that both dead faces bore a peaceful look, and on the elder woman's slightly-opened lips there seemed to hover an exultant smile.

Closing the room, Burke got his coat and belongings, then locked up the house. Some hours later he was sitting with the Chief of Police, relating the tragedy. The Chief drove with Burke to the Sheriff of the county, and together they went to the house. The Sheriff had called up the coroner, and they found him waiting for them.

A brief examination of the women revealed that both had died of heart failure, probably induced by some unexplainable shock. Burke took the Sheriff aside. On the detective's suggestion, they wrecked the attic room in a thorough search. Burke wanted to locate the source of the dropping blood.

At the conclusion of their quest the mystery was finished, for Burke. But it was to Rhyne that he confessed his failure.

Returning to his apartment in New York, he found Rhyne there.

"Well," cried the latter, as soon as he appeared, "did you solve the mystery?"

"No," replied Burke. "I did not."

Rhyne's eyes opened. "Well—what did you find?"

"Over the attic room," said Burke musingly," we found a small, cryptlike space between the ceiling of the attic room and the roof of the house. It was encased in plaster. As we broke through the ceiling, a mass of human bones came tumbling down. The coroner pronounced them the skeletons of a woman and a girl. Both had been dead for generations.

"Through the shoulder blade of the girl's skeleton was a jagged hole. When the bones fell, the elder woman's skull rolled to my feet. I picked it up. Something rattled inside and I worked it out through the eye socket. It was a slug of lead.

"Both the woman and the girl had been murdered."

Queer Tribe of Savages Found in Africa

ONE of the strangest tribes in Africa is that of the El Molo. Ruled by a blind chief, they live on an island near the east shore of Lake Rudolf in East Africa, their shelter being crude huts fashioned from palm leaves. They live entirely on fish, which they spear and eat raw, and they drink nothing except the water in the lake, which the white man considers unfit to drink. It is said they cannot live for more than an hour without water, their lips swelling and bleeding if they try to go longer. They use a language of their own, different from that of the other African tribes.

African Brides Must Be Plump

THE wild tribes of Africa consider no girl beautiful unless she is abnormally fat. Hence their young girls are fed on milk and fattening foods, and are not permitted to exercise. This forced fattening is not only a necessary preparation for marriage—it is also good business for a girl's parents. When a girl marries, the bridegroom pays her parents for her, and the amount he pays is based on the degree of plumpness of the bride whom they have fattened for him.

An Odd, Fantastic Little Story of the Stone Age

Nimba, the Cave Girl

By R. T. M. Scott

MANY thousands of years ago, when the poles of the earth were its pleasant spots and when the tropics were too hot for human life, Nimba grew to her full height and was still a maid.

Many had been her suitors, but, from the time she had pulled down her first wild animal, she had lived much apart from others of her kind and had become known as a mighty traveler and hunter. She could run a hundred miles in one day over the worst kind of country, and she had matched her brains successfully against the most wonderful of animal cunning. Unaided, she could support herself, and she did not want a mate—at least, not yet.

Somewhere, not far south of what is now called James Bay, is a beautiful lake lying between steep-sloping, wood-covered hills. At one end of this lake a great boulder once stood, heaving its huge mass a full hundred feet above the water. At its back the steep hillside gave access to its summit. At its front the water rippled or dashed against one hundred feet of straight wall.

Yet not quite perfect was this wall. In its very center, and slightly overhanging the lake, was a tiny cave, an irregular cavity large enough to shelter two or three people. Fifty feet above the water and fifty feet below the top of the great rock, this natural shelter against rain or enemy seemed inaccessible to anything without wings. But the skin of a long-haired animal was stretched to dry against the back of this little cave—pegged to the cracks and crannies by means of great thorns. Scattered here and there were bleached bones—relics of past meals eaten by Nimba.

IT WAS a hot afternoon, and the sun was beating the earth in its usual relentless fury. To the south the great cloud-masses of steam were rising and tumbling upon themselves in rain, only to revaporize and rise again.

The air was still with a breathless quiet, which presaged continued fine weather and little danger of the hot humidity of the south being blown northward. On the eastern horizon a

mighty mountain belched its head off and sent a column of fire into the sky that rivaled the glare of the sun.

Suddenly the bushes parted behind the great rock-sentinel of the lake. Nimba sprang out and ran to the highest vantage point. There she stood, motionless, gazing at the burning mountain. Fire did not frighten her as it did the creatures which ran on four legs; rather it attracted her.

She stood long, viewing the new magnificence of the eastern horizon, her coppery-tanned skin glistening in the sun and her firm young breasts rising and falling as if they, too, saw and wondered in dreamy contemplation. Lithe were her legs and arms, and slender her waist, with hips full big but boy-like in their taper. Her hair was bound with little tendrils into a cue that reached below her waist and then was doubled to keep it off the ground. Sun-burned, its hue was a golden glory. A deep scar marked her face, but this only added to its barbaric beauty.

Of a sudden, she bent as in the act of listening and then leaped back into the bushes, only to return with a small animal she had killed, and dragging behind her a stout creeper of great length. Fastening one end of the creeper to a jutting rock, she threw the other end over the face of the great boulder and, holding with one hand the animal's leg, lowered herself to the cave in the wall with all the agility of a monkey.

Scarcely had she entered her tiny abode before she noticed that her creeper ladder was being violently agitated from above. She leaned far out from her cave in a perilous manner and saw descending toward her a long pair of hairy legs followed by the rest of a man.

Picking up a stout club from the back of her cave, Nimba waited until the legs came within reach and then caught the man a blow on his thigh that caused him to yell lustily and to ascend a few feet with great rapidity.

He did not entirely retreat, however, but, turning around like a caterpillar on a thread, again descended, this time head first in order to keep a bright outlook.

NIMBA now saw the man's face, and she disliked it more than his legs. Her small features convulsed with rage, and she spat at him and beat the wall with her club in a frenzy. She knew him well.

He was Oomba, one of the strong and cruel men of her tribe. When he was fifteen he had killed his grandfather for a stoneheaded club. He had caught the old man unawares, which act of caution had been construed as timidity so that he had few friends until he became too strong to withstand.

When Oomba had descended until his face was within twelve inches beyond the reach of the girl's club, he hung there, gloating over her with greedy, lustful eyes. For half an hour he hung, face downward, sensuously intoning to the infuriated girl.

"With me hunt! With me eat! With me sleep!"

At the end of half an hour Nimba was still spitting at him and still clubbing the wall with unabated energy.

"Oomba go! Oomba go! Me you will not touch!" she screamed at intervals.

Finally Oomba climbed back to the top of the rock—but he did not give up. He pulled the great creeper up after him. He would trap the little spit-cat, he thought, and so tame her.

But he did not know Nimba.

As soon as the object of her hatred became lost to sight Nimba calmed herself. When she saw her rope of escape withdrawn she waited for some time in silence. Then she stepped to the edge of her cave home—and her body flashed forward through the sunlit air like a gleam of gold. For fifty feet the gleam curved, then struck the water silently like a knife. Fifteen yards from where she struck, Nimba's face appeared above the surface glancing upward toward the top of the rock.

Oomba peering over the rock, witnessed Nimba's mighty dive. For a moment he scowled at her before dashing into the bushes just as Nimba swam into shallow water.

NIMBA rose near the shore, her club dripping in her hand. She bounded along the rough shore line, keeping at least ankle deep in the water. Rounding a small, wooded point, she came to an overhanging bough upon which she climbed.

Here she broke two or three small branches and sped on into the next tree and the next, throwing herself from limb to limb and breaking small branches in her flight. Finally she broke a very small branch and leaped into a densely foliaged tree without so much as crushing a leaf. And here she ensconced herself from sight.

Her trap was laid. She clung to a limb as silent and watchful as any animal of prey, her long club between her young body and the bark on which she lay.

The minutes passed while Nimba's dark eyes kept constant watch through the green leaves that formed her mask. Abruptly, as she watched, a young man stepped out and stood beneath her tree. Strong and straight was he. His eyes were bright and the hair on his face was short and soft. Not a leaf rustled as Nimba watched with growing interest. Below her the man stood quietly scenting the air.

Suddenly a twig snapped, and the young man turned like a flash, only to receive Oomba's mighty club full on the head. So silently had Oomba approached that the listening Nimba had not detected the slightest sound. Now he stood looking down at his victim and contemptuously turning the bleeding head from side to side with his foot, quite unconscious of any lurking danger.

Clinging only by her feet from the bough upon which she had been lying, Nimba reached down and swung her club with vicious force upon the side of Oomba's head. Beside his own victim he fell, while Nimba dropped lightly to the ground, turning in the air like a cat and landing upon her feet.

Quickly she dragged Oomba to one side, where two rocks abutted, and wedged his head vicelike between them. Then she beat it with her club until it had no shape at all and the leaves and little green things nearby were spattered with blood. There was no doubt about it: Oomba was dead.

GREAT satisfaction showed on Nimba's face when her bloody task was done.

She washed the blood from her body in the lake and returned to examine the young man who had first been struck down. Apparently satisfied with his condition, she picked him up and, trailing her bloody club, returned to her great rock at the head of the lake. Here she found the creeper where Oomba had left it and experienced little difficulty in climbing down to the privacy of her cave with the senseless man under one arm.

Two trips she made for water, which was carried in a gourd and stored in a hollow in the cave floor. This done, Nimba washed the young man's face, wet his hair and propped him in a corner to recover his senses.

Her work of mercy finished, Nimba turned her attention to the animal which she had killed earlier in the day. Dragging it from its corner, she placed both feet upon the body while she tore off a leg with one furious wrench. As the sun was setting and the deep purple of the hills became bordered with gold, Nimba commenced the one meal of the day to which she was accustomed. It would soon be time to sleep.

Almost as the last shaft of sunlight shot over the distant hills consciousness returned to the young man as he sat propped in the corner of the cave. Slowly he looked about him. He rose to his feet and walked to the edge of the cave, where he gazed down at the lake and examined the dangling creeper down which he had been carried.

Finally the young man approached Nimba, who had stopped eating and was silently watching him, her mouth bloody from her raw repast. He dragged the animal from her side and shoved her into a corner, where a jagged stone cut her shoulder, causing the blood to flow. Having eaten his fill, the man lay down to sleep.

The great moon rose and silvered the sleeping lake. A night-bird screeched as it swept by the entrance to the cave and Nimba crept from her corner. Still bleeding, she stretched herself beside the sleeping man. Her body touched his and some blood from her shoulder mingled with his in a tiny pool.

Below them, in the water, a reptile splashed its way among the reeds. Nimba and her master slept.

Nimba had taken her mate.

NEXT MONTH

"THE BODYMASTER"
A Novelette by Harold Ward

"THE SQUARE OF CANVAS"
By Anthony M. Rud

"THE AFFAIR OF THE MAN IN SCARLET"
By Julian Kilman

"THE INCUBUS"
By Hamilton Craigie

"THE LIVING NIGHTMARE"
By Anton M. Oliver

AND OTHER STRANGE TALES

What Comes After Death?

An Anonymous Author Gives a Startling Answer in

The YOUNG MAN *who* WANTED TO DIE

By ? ? ?

FIRST EPISODE

IN A MEAN, miserable, two-dollar-a-week bedroom in a Chicago lodging-house a young man was calmly and deliberately preparing to kill himself.

He possessed youth, health, affluence and comeliness—and yet he was preparing to kill himself. Calmly and deliberately. In the shabby room of a shabby hovel.

With a penknife, he was ripping the bedclothes to ribbons and wedging them into chinks and crannies. At last satisfied that the room was as near gas-tight as he could make it, he stripped to his underclothing and sat down at the battered bureau and began to write:

"As soon as my dead body is found the newspapers will want to know why I did it. I'll tell them. And they may scarehead it as much as they like. I don't care. I've destroyed every clue to my identity, and though I am wealthy enough to be pointed to and stared at, there is not one in this vast city whom I know, not one who cares

whether I am alive tomorrow morning, or dead.

"A love motive? Yes. But there is also something else—something equally potent to me, however weak and flimsy it may appear to others. I loved and do still love a girl whom I have known from childhood, but always there has been this thing that stood between us, and which is chiefly accountable for what I am about to do. It is not drink—nor gambling, nor hereditary disease.

"It is a Curiosity. An awful, overwhelming, unconquerable Curiosity. As far back as I can remember, I've had a terrible desire to know what follows death. As I grew up, this craving increased until it was a positive mania. I devoured every book on theosophy and kindred subjects I could lay hands on; I attended meetings of psychic societies; at college my avidity for psychology was remarked by everybody. At length I had reached the point where I yearned to tear aside the black veil of death and discover her secret. Why wait? I asked myself. Since you are bound to go some day, why not go now?

"One day I half-playfully voiced some such sentiment to her. It led to a dispute, which led to a violent quarrel; and that night she left the town where we both lived.

"I traced her as far as Chicago, and here I have lost her. For three years now I have searched the city for her, but not a trace have I found. And so I have given it up. It is hopeless. I shall never see her again.

"Like myself, she is alone in the world, but, unlike me, she is very poor. And somewhere in this great, monstrous city she is living even as I write these words—perhaps miles away—perhaps in the next block—perhaps . . . God alone knows, and God protect her!"

He stopped, put down his pencil, and placed his hand before his eyes. Thus he sat for several minutes. The yellow gas flames flickered weirdly at either side of the shoddy bureau; the clangor of a distant street car reached him faintly; a motor-truck rumbled heavily in the street below; a bickering couple jawed and wrangled ceaselessly in the next room.

After awhile he picked up the pencil and went on:

"Well anyway, I'm going to gratify that Curiosity. In a few hours I shall be in an unknown country I have always longed to explore. I've an idea I'll find a happiness there I have never known on this earth.

"In any event, I shall leave some good front page stuff for the newspapers. It ought to make an interesting story: 'Rich young man, seeking his lost sweetheart in the great city, gives way to despair and kills himself.' If the girl is found next door, without money to buy food or pay her room rent—"

He arose abruptly with a sharp curse, and tore up what he had written. Then he turned off both gas jets, then turned them on full, and then lay down upon the cot in a corner of the room . . .

It was perhaps some twenty minutes before his body began to twitch convulsively.

"Lily May!" he murmured huskily. Then more hoarsely still, "Lily May—forgive—Lily May!"

. . . His body was writhing and twisting horribly now. His hands were clutching at the air, at his clothing, at the mattress; his legs were contracting and relaxing spasmodically. His face turned purple: he choked and gasped.

"Lily May!" he cried in a stifling whisper, and attempted to lift his arms.

But he could not, and his lips ceased moving and his head fell back, and he lay very still.

SECOND EPISODE.

WHEN the deadly gas fumes reached the youth on the cot he turned over on his back, threw his arms out, and breathed long and deeply of the poisoned air.

His head throbbed and pounded: his heart pumped madly; his eyes started from their sockets. Yet still he lay with outstretched arms, inhaling evenly and steadily.

Then everything within him seemed to warp and become distorted and askew. His veins tied themselves in knots. His blood choked and clogged. An awful weight crushed and crunched his breast.

But he set his teeth and clenched his fists, and continued to gulp in the murderous air.

Then he felt himself dropping, gently, gently—down, down, down—as though invisible hands were lowering him into some bottomless, pitch black cavern.

But suddenly there burst upon his vision a dazzling golden light, and far above him he saw a blazing throne, sparkling and flashing with a strange brilliancy, and on the throne a girl, her hair undone, her body clothed in a virginal robe. And she gazed down upon him with eyes full of sadness and reproach. And he tried to call out to her, and tried to lift his arms to her. . . .

And the fiendish darkness swept all away and closed in upon him and crushed him, and he knew no more.

THIRD EPISODE.

EONS of time had passed.

All was impenetrable blackness. With incredible velocity, he was whizzing through infinite space. Nothing supported him: nothing touched him. Some unseen, unfelt, unthinkable Force was hurling him outward into a Stygian, unbounded void.

Then, so gradually that it was scarcely perceptible, the blackness was dyed a pallid, ghastly hue. And with a shocking suddenness it became alive with a horrible larvae. Bloodless and transparent things, they seemed, filling the air with a swarming, wriggling magnitude of loathsome life. And he was a part of this!

He put out his hand: and though he felt no touch, he saw the squirming mass of worms pass through his flesh as though nothing were there. And he knew his body swarmed with them as though it were decayed cheese, and an unspeakable, revolting nausea surged through him.

Then the paleness vanished, and the larvae with it, and he was still shooting through the horrible darkness.

ANOTHER eon had passed.

Nor had his terrible flight abated. Outward, through unlighted infinitude, he swept untiringly. Unearthly sounds now filled the air—voices screaming in agony, cries and moans as of tortured souls, insane laughter and maniacal shrieks. Anon, with a howl and a hiss, some shrieking air dragon would roar past him. And, all around, he could hear the bellow and screech of monsters of the air in terrible conflict.

Then all turned to an ocean of living blood; and great crimson bellows belched over him, wave upon horrid wave. And the frightful aerial mammals, invisible a moment before, were now seen leaping and plunging through that scarlet sea.

Under him and over him they ducked and bounded—gigantic, green-hued monsters extravagantly hideous. Now and again one would dart for him, mouth distended. But the next second he would be far away, with the ghastly creature in hopeless pursuit.

Slowly the liquid redness merged into a shimmering rainbow of vivid colors. Yellow and green, and purple and blue and orange, streaked the air with a prismatic glory, glittering and scintillating with a marvelous beauty.

Then, with a terrific suddenness, like a noiseless thunderclap, the blackness rushed in and blotted out the dazzling irideecence, and cloaked all in Cimmerian darkness.

FOURTH EPISODE.

ANOTHER eon.

So far away it seemed a distant star, the lone traveler through the infinite Void discerned a dull red glow. Larger and larger it grew as he soared toward it with lightning velocity.

And now it seemed a great mass of flameless fire, shedding its cold rays for millions of miles. With every second it grew in size until it was come to inconceivable proportion. And then it seemed to shrivel up, and turn ashen and wrinkled, and become as a dead and crumbling sun.

But suddenly the husk burst open, and the wayfarer described, dimly at first, what seeme the outermost rim of some gorgeous, primeval world.

Awhile it was as though he were watching it from afar off; but he traversed thousands of leagues in as many seconds, and swiftly it took definite shape as he flew nearer and yet nearer.

And then his journey through illimitable space was at an end, and he had alighted upon this unknown world, and was wandering through a dense jungle of some marvelous fungus that attained a wondrous height.

Seemingly without his own volition, he at length found himself lying on a verdant mound overlooking a vast tropical morass that reached off on all sides into endless vista.

And while he lay there he witnessed in that untracked wilderness a diabolical spectacle appalling as hell itself!

Grisly, indescribable Things—satyrs and ogres and demons and fiends—appeared in countless numbers, and held orgies that were Madness intensified. Now they were reveling and cavorting in wanton abandon; anon battling among themselves in murderous ferocity.

After a time he viewed a sight still more horrible. Off to the right, he saw a monstrous snake's head, as huge as the body of a hippopotamus, rise up from the swamp and gaze on ravenously at the riotous revel.

An instant later the licentious carousal was become wildest terror. The forest was alive with frightful reptiles—gigantic, stupendous things that passed the extent of all imagination. Down they swooped upon their terrified prey, their enormous, slippery bodies undulating in great writhing leaps.

The horde of unearthly Things, disporting in hellish debauchery a moment before, were swiftly swallowed up by the serpents. Left in possession of the swamp, they flopped about venomously for a time, demolishing and laying waste all about them.

They then fell upon one another in unspeakable combat, wriggling and squirming slimily together, their repulsive, green-black lengths intertwined like enormous angle worms. And they killed and devoured each other, until at last there was left but one hideous, swollen monster.

It leaped and dashed about, lashing its great tail furiously, tearing down giant trees as though they were weeds. And as the young man watched, the incredible thing seemed to swell larger and larger. And then he saw it stop suddenly in its Brobdingnagian gambol and rigidly poise its hideous head. And he looked straight into its horrifying eyes!

They were fixed steadily upon him. But a moment it staid thus; then its head dropped, and he saw its mammoth body undulating swiftly toward him through the swamp.

He strove to cry out, but could utter no sound. He tried to move, but his body was as lead.

On came the thing with frightful rapidity; parts of its writhing length now sinking in the quagmire, now towering high above it. Now he could see that massive head swinging from side to side. Now only a dark, slimy greenish mass, describing an arch above the swamp, showed its location.

Now it was close upon him. Its vast head swooped up a scant distance away. Its fulsome eyes blazed upon him with a furious fire. Its great drooping jaws swung open. They bristled with venomous fangs.

The monster gathered itself in a dozen gigantic coils and lept through the air—

"GOD!" he shrieked.

"There, there," soothed a tender voice. "Don't excite yourself. You'll be all right presently. Just remain quiet, that's all."

A cool hand was laid gently upon his brow. He looked up at the young nurse who sat beside his cot.

Without saying a word, he stared for quite a long time at her face, until her cheeks were as crimson as the ribbon at her throat. When at length he spoke, he was half laughing, half sobbing, and the syntax of his utterance would scarcely have delighted a professor of English at Harvard University.

"Well, I've been, girl," said he. "Got a round trip ticket. But never, never again. What'd you run away for? Yep, I've had my fill: no more metaphysics. *Phew!* Such reptiles! Big as this room, some of 'em. I looked three years, and it ran me crazy. *Ugh!* those snakes and lizards. Hired detectives, too, but it was no use. And I thought it was all sunshine and flowers and sweet music. You won't run away again, will you? Could you get me a little brandy, Lily May? I'm feeling a bit faint."

LAST EPISODE

THE YOUNG man made a mistake about the newspapers. One inch was all he got, tucked snugly between a patent medicine advertisement and the notice of a sheriff's sale. It read:

> **"An unidentified youth attempted to take his life in a North Side rooming-house last night by inhaling gas. The landlady smelled the odor of gas and called the police. Miss Lily May Kettering, a nurse at the National Emergency Hospital, who seems to know the young man, although refusing to divulge his identity, reports that he is on the road to recovery."**

There's an Eerie Thrill in

The Scarlet Night

By WILLIAM SANFORD

DR. LANGLEY was in love with my wife.

This had been very evident to me for many weeks. Also it was most evident to me that his love was entirely reciprocated.

The doctor was a young and handsome fellow, who bore the reputation of being more or less unscrupulous. An unpleasant story had followed him from another city—the story of the drowning of a young girl. Although the coroner's verdict had been that of accidental drowning, there were those, it was said, who thought that the doctor knew much more of the matter than had been brought to light, and rumor had it that he had left the place because he was no longer popular there.

The doctor had a pleasing personality, however, and a way with him that had the effect of disarming any prejudice against him. He was, in brief, a ladies' man, possessing all of the little attentions and flatteries so dear to the heart of women. And he gave them all with a subtle manner of sincerity that made them doubly potent.

The doctor's practice was fairly large, and he had also succeeded in having himself appointed local medical examiner for our town. He was deeply interested in his chosen profession, and still fascinated by the dissecting-room. He owned a handsome touring-car with which, as I knew, my wife was very familiar.

My wife was twenty-five — fifteen years my junior—pretty and with much charm of manner, yet possessed of a certain hardness of nature and lack of sympathy for the suffering of others, unusual in a young woman of good breeding. She came of excellent family, was well educated and always had associated with good people.

I had been somewhat addicted to strong drink before we were married, but had managed to keep it from her to a certain extent. She knew that I drank, but thought that it was no more than many men do at their clubs. Of my several wild sprees out of town she had never heard.

We had been married two years when Dr. Langley took up his practice in our town, and from the moment he made a professional call on my wife, for some minor ailment, they had become intensely interested in each other.

My drinking habits had increased, rather than diminished, since my marriage, and I no longer made any effort to keep occasional lurid fits of intoxication from her. My love for liquor became as much a part of my life as food or sleep. My position as assistant manager in a large wholesale house was fairly secure, however, and one not easy to fill, which perhaps accounted for the firm still holding me.

One cold, bleak evening in November, while I was playing cards at my club—and, thanks to the rum-runners who thrived in our town, drinking whisky—I heard a strangely-familiar voice call my name in greeting, and, looking up, I was overjoyed to behold an old friend of bygone days, whom I had not seen in several years. He had dropped off on his way to another city.

The time was ripe for a celebration

in honor of our meeting. My friend produced a quart flask of whisky from his suitcase, saying that it was the duplicate of one he had already sampled, and spoke to me of its age, strength, fine quality, and the high price he had been obliged to pay for it. Thereupon he presented it to me. I thanked him heartily and opened the flask, and we all drank a couple of rounds from it. All of that day, and the day previous, I had been drinking more or less heavily.

Cards were resumed and we played until after midnight, when, with many a hand-shake, I bade good-by to my friend, who was obliged to catch a train to reach his destination the following noon. The card game being broken up, we had a farewell round of drinks, and I stumbled out into the night.

The cool air soon revived my somewhat befuddled brain. Also, I was soon shaking with the cold. Remembering the generous sized flask of whisky in my pocket, the gift of my friend, I uncorked it and took a long drink, rejoicing in the fact that the bottle was still almost two-thirds full.

Reaching home, I went at once to my bedroom. My wife was seated in a chair by the window in her dressing-gown. As I entered, she rose and, without any preliminaries of speech, she asked that I at once give her a divorce so that she might marry Dr. Langley. She said there was no reason why I should not do this, since I might then marry some woman who cared for me, and that she would be happy with the man she had learned to love.

The abruptness of her request, together with the cold, matter-of-fact way in which she put it dumfounded me, but, hastily regaining my composure, I flatly refused any such action, told my wife that she must remain true to her marriage vows, and that nothing would ever induce me to give her the divorce she wanted. Furthermore, I told her that the doctor was a scoundrel—that many people believed he had murdered a girl before coming to our town.

At this, my wife became livid with fury, accused me of deliberately besmirching the doctor's character because of jealousy, and declared she would never live with me again.

The next day, however, she seemed much changed. She was very agreeable, even tender, to me. We walked about the little garden of our home, as we had often done in the early days of our marriage, and I felt confident that she had decided to put the doctor out of her mind and allow our married life to go on as usual.

We chatted pleasantly together at the dinner table that evening, and as usual I drank a cup of strong coffee after the meal.

A few moments later a heavy drowsiness came over me and I knew no more. . . . .

I AWOKE with a feeling of suffocation—as if a thousand tons of weight were resting on my chest.

I gasped for breath. I was suffering torture. All about me was blackness—impenetrable blackness. I moved my hands and encountered boards, above and on every side. Gradually, to my numbed senses, the horrible realization came to me, and the cold sweat started out on my body—*I had been buried alive!*

The terrible realization had a tendency to clear my mind somewhat, in spite of the difficulty I encountered in breathing. I saw it all now. My wife had given me some powerful drug in my coffee, a drug obtained from the doctor. They had planned and plotted the thing in case I refused to consent to a divorce.

They probably had known I was still alive when I was buried. The doctor, as medical examiner, had filed some fictitious report of death from natural causes, and they had contrived to have a hasty funeral. How I had managed to breathe for so long in the coffin, while under the power of the drug, I did not know. Now that I was fully conscious again I felt myself stifling.

No power of imagination can picture the horror and torture of mind that my terrible predicament forced upon me. I must die a slow, terrible death, while

those who were responsible for the hellish crime enjoyed themselves and went unpunished. The minutes seemed to drag into hours, as I lay there struggling for breath.

Suddenly, out of the horrible black stillness, I heard a noise above me. Listening, with every racked nerve on edge, I heard it come nearer—nearer. At first I could not make it out—could not understand—and then, suddenly, the truth dawned upon me with a horrible intensity: *The body snatchers were after me for the dissecting-room!*

I tried to cry out, but was unable to make a sound, because of my stifling condition. They reached the coffin, and I heard the shovel scraping against it. Then I felt myself being slowly lifted upward, and the coffin was dumped on the ground.

Now I heard a voice, and my blood ran cold, *for it was the voice of Dr. Langley.*

"The drug was an Oriental one," he was saying. "It causes a semblance of death that lasts a long time, but he probably died a few minutes after he was buried. I am anxious to dissect to see what effect such a drug has on the human body!"

And then, with a terrible shock, I heard the voice of my wife:

"I don't care. Do as you wish. I hated him from the moment he refused to give me a divorce. I could even watch you cut up his body!"

I struggled to rise in the coffin, gasping for the breath of life, and then the lid was pried off, and, summoning all my dying strength, I rose to my feet, waving my arms wildly back and forth and inhaling a great breath of life-giving night air.

The doctor let the shovel fall to the ground without a word, and staggered back and sank to his knees, while my wife gave a hideous scream of terror. Then she snatched a knife from his kit of dissecting instruments and drew the razor-sharp blade across her throat. She then threw herself upon the prostrate doctor, her blood drenching his body.

My senses reeling, I staggered forward, tripped over my coffin and fell swooning to the ground.

NONE believe my story. Neither will you. I have told it to them all, but they will not believe it.

I am in a hospital, where they tell me I have been for several days. It is a prison hospital, where guards in uniform patrol the corridors, lest even the sick try to escape.

They ask me if I cannot remember that I came home that night from the club in a blind frenzy of drink and found my wife and Dr. Langley together. They tell me that I choked him with such ferocity and strength that my fingers broke into the flesh of his neck. They tell me that my wife, screaming with terror, tried to escape, and that, just as the people in the adjoining apartment burst into the room, I seized a razor from the bureau and slashed her throat from ear to ear, and threw her body, with the blood streaming from the wound, across that of the doctor.

Are they going to hang me for this double crime that I did not commit?

They will not believe my story. Yet every detail of it is as clear to me as the stars that shine in the heavens.

Read of the Frightful Thing That Came from

The Extraordinary Experiment *of* Dr. Calgroni

By Joseph Faus and James Bennett Wooding

THERE is much concerning the queer Dr. Calgroni that I can not give to the world.

It should be remembered that I had never been inside his house until after I beheld him frantically emerge from its big front door, that rainy night, his wizened face as white as death, and, scantily-clad, rush headlong for the depot.

That he was a surgeon of extraordinary ability I readily acknowledge. But Belleville was the last place where one would expect to find a man of such surgical skill, and, most undoubtedly, the last place one would choose for the scene of the startling events brought about as a result of the doctor's purchase of the ape "Horace" from Barber's World-famous 3-Ring Show.

Had the doctor merely put up at the hotel I might have believed him, like myself, merely summering at Belleville. For it was a restful hamlet, situated in a mountainous valley, something like a day's run from New York. But his renting of the Thornsdale place aroused latent suspicions in my mind, probably instilled there by that strange article I had read in *The Surgical Monthly*.

Large enough for a hotel or boarding-house, but out-of-the-way located—also because of the enormous rent demanded by its heirs—the Thornsdale place had stood vacant since the last of the Thornsdale line had died ten years before. Its doors had been closed and padlocked, and its windows barricaded.

It had been the finest residence in the old town in its day, but was now regarded as a sort of historic oddity. On the whole, it afforded a formidable appearance, crouching behind its great elms, looming huge and weather-beaten, with its board-shuttered and frowning windows. But just the sort of place the

eccentric Dr. Calgroni could work in, unmolested.

I saw the peculiar doctor one morning as I was leaving the small post office. It was just after train time, and many of the villagers were loitering about the place, among them a young man named Jason Murdock.

Murdock was of that type one always hears of in a small community—the village "devil." He came of a good family, and had plenty of money and all that: but had succeeded, despite rich heritage-blood, in igniting more fire and brimstone than all five of the village preachers had in their imagination conceived. He was coarsely good-looking, and big and husky.

Aristocratic hoodlum though he was, all rather secretly admired the fellow, probably because he injected "pep" into the lazy old town.

I beheld Jason Murdock pointing to a shriveled-up figure of a little man, stooped of shoulder.

"There he goes—that Dr. Can-groan-ee, who's movin' into the Thornsdale place. I wonder if there's any good liquor in his cellar? That old Thornsdale dump has a good wine cellar."

Dr. Calgroni paid not the slightest attention to Jason's insolent babble, but walked hurriedly along, his clean-shaven, dried-up countenance turning neither to the right nor left.

"Who is that man?" I asked the postmaster, who had now come to the door for air.

"I dunno, excepting his mail is addressed Dr.—I'll have to spell it—C-A-L-G-R-O-N-I—and it is mostly foreign, out of Vienna, forwarded here from New York."

"Sort of a man of mystery, eh?" I hazarded.

"I should say he's sort of a fool for rentin' that old Thornsdale rat-trap, for God-knows-what, that's stood vacant these ten years."

I nodded and left in the direction taken by the doctor.

Here was an element of mystery; for I alone, of all the villagers, knew that this eminent surgeon's presence in Belleville boded ill.

I SOON caught sight of the doctor. For a man of his age and physique, his gait was exceedingly fast—as though propelled by a nervous dynamo. Stretching my legs, I kept a safe distance between him and myself, until he swung open the tall wooden gate and quickly vanished through the wilderness of tall bushes and low trees into the Thornsdale house. I halted safe from observation and lighted my pipe.

Leaning against a tree there, I ran over in my mind the odd significance of that remarkable article I had recently read in the staid and ever-authentic *Surgical Monthly*.

This Dr. Calgroni, it appeared, had stated to the interviewer that he was here from Austria on a vacation—and to feel out the opinions of American surgeons anent his new theory. One *Herr* von Meine, a noted surgeon of Vienna, he added with some asperity, had scoffed at the absurdity and unorthodox idea of the unprecedented theory advanced by him, and had declared that his, Calgroni's, operation was extremely impossible, not to say foolish—that it would never be a success.

Dr. Calgroni claimed that he could prolong a human life indefinitely by the insertion of a live thigh gland from a young quadrumanous mammal, such as the *Pithecoid*.

Much discussion and argument had been provoked throughout the entire medical world by the famous doctor's The Extraordinary Experiment of Dr. theory, and consensus was that he was an impracticable theorist gone mad.

And now here was Dr. Calgroni, living in the quiet little town of Belleville, where none was aware of his sensational hypothesis, renting this immense old ramshackle place, and his remarkable intent known to no one but himself.

I had taken a seat on a tree stump, in front of the gate, which had a ring stapled to it, used in former days as a hitching post. Time hung heavily upon me in Belleville, but this new element of mystery promised some possible interest and excitement.

Having sat there until my pipe was empty and cold, I was aroused by the

noise of the gate opening behind me, followed by the *tap-tap* of a hammer. I turned.

There stood the doctor in his shirt sleeves, tacking a sign to the gate post. Crudely painted in black on white cardboard I read:

POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE!

Anyone entering here does so at his own risk.

T. Calgroni.

Without even casting a glance my way, the doctor closed the gate behind him and seemed about to depart up the weed-grown gravel walk, when, glancing down the dusky street, he checked himself.

My gaze followed the direction of his eyes. A wagon was approaching. It drew up at the stump and halted. Loaded with big boxes, the mules were sweating after the pull. Their surly-faced driver stopped twenty feet away and turned to the doctor:

"I know I'm late," I overheard him grumble, "but I handled the boxes carefully as you said. Shall I drive in?"

"You'd better," returned Calgroni in crisp English, still not noticing me. "And remember, if there's a thing broken not a cent do you get." And he wheeled up the path.

"Dam' him!" swore the teamster, turning to me. "Did you ever see such an old crab?"

"Glass inside the boxes?" I suggested.

The fellow looked at me suspiciously, then his lips contracted like a vise and he turned to his mules. I watched him drive through the wagon gate, and on up through the moss-covered trees to the house.

II.

THE NEXT morning I arose early, with the intention of strolling pass the old Thornsdale place. I found Main Street lifeless, except for two men busily engaged in posting up the glaring announcement of the coming of:

"BARBER'S WORLD-FAMOUS 3-RING SHOW"

Pausing, I watched them swab the long multi-hued strips of paper with their paste brush and sling them upon the billboard. A small crowd of big-eyed youngsters and loafers gradually congregated about the busy circus advance men.

The most glaring and conspicuous poster represented two gorillas peering angrily out from behind the bars of their cage. Beneath it was lithographed in huge, red letters:

"MIMMIE AND HORACE "ONLY WILD GORILLAS IN CAPTIVITY!"

I turned to leave—and, momentarily startled, faced what seemed to be one of the gorillas at large! Only it wore clothes. Gazing at the poster with a look of blank curiosity, was a man, short in stature, immense of shoulder and deep of chest, his hair thatching his forehead almost to his bushy eyebrows. He was hideous to look upon. I recognized him, though, after an instant, as the village half-wit, known as "Simple Will."

I had seen him before, a poor, weak-minded creature, wandering helplessly about the village, pitied, but spurned except when someone needed the help of powerful hands and a strong back.

Drooling and muttering, Will followed the circus men as they started off.

I idly strolled down the first street; then, reaching the outskirts of town, I found myself in the rear of the Thornsdale place. To my surprise, I beheld another warning notice similar to the one that Dr. Calgroni had tacked to his front gate last evening. Not only in one but many places, on trees and the high fence, I saw the warning signs of "No Trespassing." The doctor himself was nowhere to be seen.

A week slipped by and nothing happened further than gossip concerning the queer doctor. Occasionally Dr. Calgroni, in person, purchased supplies and called for his mail. Although I contrived to be near him whenever possible, he seldom uttered more than half a dozen words—and never to me. Once, though, I thought I caught him peering surreptitiously at me in a queer manner.

Obviously, the doctor was his own servant, housekeeper and cook. No one took the risk of entering his place—not even the daring Jason Murdock.

Several days before the circus arrived, I noticed what I considered a peculiarly significant happening — Dr. Calgroni walking toward his abode, with Simple Will tagging, doglike, a few paces behind.

At discreet distance, I followed them. Arriving at the Thornsdale place, I was surprised to see the doctor close the gate behind him, leaving Will standing outside. The half-wit stood there until Dr. Calgroni disappeared.

The day before the show came, I saw the doctor clapping Will on the shoulder and talking to him.

That night such a terrible conclusion shaped itself in my mind as to the meaning of the singular boxes, the hostile notices, Will's attitude toward the doctor, and the latter's interest in him, that it kept me wide awake.

In ill humor at myself, I rose at the first appearance of the sun. Remembering the circus, I strolled over to the tracks to watch it unload.

Some villagers had gathered about the few wretched travel-scarred cars that made up the second-rate circus train, and particularly in front of the car containing the cage of Mimmie and Horace.

Doctor Calgroni was there, and, at his heels, Simple Will. The doctor was talking very earnestly to the trainer.

"You say Mr. Barber has offered to sell either of these animals," the doctor was saying, as I drew up on the outer fringe of the curious crowd.

"Yes sir. He will sell one because they fight continually. They have to be carefully watched, or they might kill each other. You don't know what ferocious beasts gorillas are—"

The doctor smiled.

"I would like to talk to Mr. Barber," he interposed.

The gorilla trainer hesitated, then, pulling shut the sliding doors of the animal car:

"Sure; just follow me," he said.

The doctor, at the man's side, walked to a coach ahead, the combination ticket-and-executive office of the Barber Shows. For an instant, Simple Will seemed to hesitate, but he didn't trail Dr. Calgroni—the unseen things inside of the gigantic cage nearby seemed to hold his hypnotic attention. Several big drops of rain splashed upon the cinder-strewn ground. The heavens hung black and dismal; the sun had completely vanished.

I watched Simple Will. He was ill-at-ease, hovering uneasily about the gorillas' car. The other people nearby paid no attention to the half-wit. Presently the trainer and Dr. Calgroni returned, accompanied by another man, who was counting a roll of bills.

"You say," the latter remarked as they passed me, "that you want 'Horace' delivered at once?"

"Yes," replied the doctor concisely.

"All right. Hank, call the gang, unload the cage and put Horace in that red single cage. Dr. Calgroni has relieved us of him!"

At this, Simple Will approached the surgeon and touched his sleeve.

"You buy hairy animal-man?" he mumbled.

The doctor laid his blue-veined and thin old hand upon Will's broad shoulder.

"Yes, Will, and I'm going to give you a job—a job as his valet!" The show men exchanged winks, and from the car rolled an empty, iron-barred cage. Will's expressionless features twisted into what on his idiot countenance registered pleasure.

Dr. Calgroni beckoned to the man whom I had seen deliver the strange-appearing boxes that first afternoon.

"Got your team?"

The fellow nodded.

A scene of bustle had sprung up about me. An excited and larger crowd of villagers had assembled.

The big cage containing Mimmie and Horace was lowered to the track side. They were two of the finest animals of their type I have ever looked upon.

Horace was transferred to the single cage and its strong door doubly pad-

locked upon him. The mule team drew up with the wagon.

"Here, Will," said the doctor to the half-wit, "climb into the wagon. We're going before we get wet." The doctor appeared highly elated.

Simple Will, who had stood by as if in a stupor, swung his heavy body up behind the gorilla's cage.

No sooner had the wagon drawn out of sight than the heavens seemed to loosen in wrath. Rain fell in torrents, driving the spectators in a wild rush for shelter. As I reached the hotel, the water dripping from my drenched garments, the storm increased its fury. All that day it rained—and the next.

As I lay on my bed that night and listened to the roar of wind and rain beating upon the roof and window panes, my mind kept drifting to the inmates of Thornsdale place—the queer doctor, Simple Will and his ward, Horace, the gigantic gorilla.

III.

IT WAS three days later that I learned Dr. Calgroni had wired to New York, and on the next morning an exceptionally well-dressed stranger, whose goatee, bearing and satchel smacked of a medical man, stepped off the train.

Espying me, he asked:

"Will you kindly direct me to the Thornsdale place?"

I told him the best way to reach Dr. Calgroni's without wading in mud, and he departed, with a brief "Thank You."

The next night I saw the stranger, ashen of face and decidedly inwardly shaken, hurriedly purchase a ticket and leave on the 9:45 train for New York.

Immediately I sought the telegraph dispatcher.

"You are aware of the queer actions of Dr. Calgroni—"

"I should say! He's a nut."

"I can't say as to that, but to whom did he send the message the other night?"

"You won't let it out I tipped you off?"

I solemnly held up my right hand.

"Well," in a whisper, "he wired a hospital for their best surgical man."

So the assistant had gone back, frightened. And why?

Several weeks later Barber's World-famous 3-Ring Show gave a return exhibition at Belleville. That night I wandered toward the Thornsdale place.

Again the clouds had banked for a storm, fitful rays of the moon now and then shifting through, only to be absorbed in mist.

Drawing around in front of the old homestead, looming dark behind the gloom-shadowed trees, I seated myself on the stump hitching-post. I was glad that in my coat pocket nestled a neat automatic. Why I lingered there in front of the quiet old place I do not know. Not a light glimmered in the house; not a noise issued from its muffled depths.

Then to my ears came a shriek and to my startled gaze a light flared in the house. I could dimly see that a figure appeared at its open door. It looked behind it for an instant, then madly bolted toward me.

Upon the wet gravel came the tread of rapidly-moving feet, and the gate in front of me swung abruptly back. In the hazy reflected light, I got one look at Dr. Calgroni who, hat and raincoat in his hands, the muscles of his face quivering, his face deathly pale, emerged and turned, running madly toward town.

I drew back, automatic in hand, waiting for whatever might follow the doctor. Nothing happened. Obeying an impulse, I took out after the fleeing surgeon. Over soggy soil I followed him, around corners, down Main Street to the depot. I got there in time to see him swing on the platform of the rear coach of the 9:45 train, bound for New York.

Throbbing with excitement, scarce knowing what I was doing, I made my way back toward the Thornsdale place. Several blocks away, I caught a glimpse of a broad-shouldered, thick-set dishevelled figure in breech-clout, running —or, rather, prancing and hopping— toward the circus grounds. The automatic in my hand, I followed.

A block from the circus grounds, under the street lamp, I saw a figure on horseback that I recognized as Jason Murdock, evidently bound for home.

Then, snarling, the Thing I had seen hopped out from behind a tree trunk, on all fours. Gaining its hind feet, it made a flying leap at Jason, knocking him from his horse. On the ground they rolled, the powerful Jason helpless in the Thing's clutch. Its fingers closed chokingly about the man's throat.

I tried to shoot, only to find my gun jammed; tried to shout, and could not.

At that instant the brass band struck up "There'll Be A Hot Time In The Old Town Tonight!" As the quick, dancing strains smote the night-air, the Thing suddenly ceased in the act of strangling Jason, looking attentively up. There seemed to be a responsive, obedient look on its horrible countenance. I could see its wild-eyes and bearded face—God! *It was simple Will!*

Bounding first on all fours, then half-upright on his feet, the crazed idiot was making for the show grounds just as the clouds broke in a downpour. To the rear of the big tent bounded Will, as the crowd scattered for home.

As if familiar with his surrounding, he made for a side-show tent in front of which sputtered a gas torch. The crowd, fleeing in the rain, had in the confusion failed to see the half-wit and myself on the mad run. But several men were following me, as Will tore aside the entrance flaps.

Inside, poorly-lighted though it was, I could plainly see the cage of Mimmie, the female-gorilla. Her trainer turned at the noise of our entrance, and hastily reached for his knife-pointed pole—but too late. Uttering a cry, piercing and antagonistic, Will flung himself at Mimmie's cage, who, with an answering cry of battle, reached both her long hairy arms through her cage, clawing and tearing at the fiercely struggling man on the outside.

The trainer rushed in with his prong, thrusting it at Mimmie. For an instant she drew back; then several of us quickly pulled Will, bleeding profusely, back from the enraged animal, who again lurched forward as though recognizing in Will the reincarnation of her mate, Horace.

Foaming at the mouth, Will sank limply to the floor. From the hue of the blood, ebbing from the side of his neck, I saw at a glance that he was done for—Mimmie's claws had severed his jugular vein.

Among the men who had helped me thrust the poor fellow out of Mimmie's reach, was the sheriff of the county.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, grasping my shoulders.

"Follow me!" I cried.

A crowd of excited men, headed by the sheriff and myself, made for the Thornsdale place. The light still dimly illuminated the hall through the open door.

"I'll go in first, sheriff," I offered. "Have your men surround the place."

I stole into the hall. A terrible stench greeted me. I found it came from a door opening out into the hall. A feeble light burned within. About me stood several boxes, with the sides torn open, and excelsior hanging and strewn about them.

Before me, completely assembled in every detail, stood what the boxes had contained—an operating table and all its many surgical accessories. Out of a long box in the corner sprawled the hairy limbs of the fast-decaying Horace, the male gorilla.

Taking a small oil lamp from the stand, I turned to examine the dead body; and I noticed a paper, which fell to the floor. A quick look at the side of the beast's head revealed a great gash, rottening at the edges, through which, it was evident, the brain had been removed.

I hastily recalled Dr. Calgroni's theories. Could it be—

My eyes chanced to drop to the floor. Holding forth the lamp, I saw there was handwriting on the bit of paper.

I picked it up and read the note, which, even at the last stand, Calgroni had directed to *me*, Von Meine, chief disparager of his wild theories:

"Herr. Von Meinc. of Vienna, you said I could not do it. You berated me for my endeavors to alleviate the distress of the insane and feeble-minded. Yet I know now that I have accomplished it, without killing the subject as you claimed would be the result of such an operation. That's why I followed you here, to show you! It was successful, Von Meinc. I could tell by the way his eyes looked into mine when he finally came to. But I could see the brain I had substituted for Will's atrophied one was too vigorous—that expression didn't belong to Simple Will. I am fleeing before he gains his strength. I admit my fear; for after this operation the former half-wit will be a dangerous customer, with the too vigorous and ferocious brain of the Gorilla Horace in his head!"

Ten Pallbearers For This Mammoth Woman

WHEN Mrs. Martha Carmas, of Middle Village, Queensboro, New York, died of elephantiasis, ten men were required to carry her body from the hospital to Lutz Church for funeral services. She weighed 710 pounds. A special coffin of immense size was made for the body. Mrs. Carmas was only thirty-three years of age, and, until she contracted the dreadful elephantiasis, she was not unusually heavy.

Woman Starves Herself To Feed Cats

IN a mean neighborhood in New York City dwelt Mary Bosanti, the "Cat Woman." The neighbors gave her that name because of her excessive love for cats. All the cats in that part of town seemed to be attracted to her house. Every day she went to the corner grocery and bought six quarts of milk, which she carried back to her room. Twenty or more cats always tagged at her heels, and when she spoke to them in a lowered tone they seemed to know what she said. They obeyed her every command. Then, one morning, a neighbor heard groans issuing from the "Cat Woman's" room and called the other tenants of the house. They broke the door in—and found the "Cat Woman" starving, surrounded by a great swarm of cats and more than 200 empty milk bottles.

Here's a "Creepy" Tale That Ends In a Shuddering, Breath-taking Way

The Return *of* Paul Slavsky

By Capt. George Warburton Lewis

Author of "Trailing the Jungle Man," "Wine of the Wilderness," Etc.

FROM Petrograd came Paul Slavsky, with what his Nihilist associates might have styled a clean record and no bungled jobs, but what Larry Brandon classified as a criminal record *de luxe*.

It was natural that such a record should bring about Slavsky's early acquaintance with Inspector Brandon, of the Central Office and it followed, as day follows dawn, that the Terrorist should become the object of the shrewdest surveillance the Chief Inspector could design.

Whether Paul Slavsky actually discovered, or merely suspected, that he was being shadowed, matters little. A notation on an old blotter shows that he boldly attempted to pave the way for future criminal enterprises by calling at the Central Office in the role of a persecuted citizen, who had journeyed here from his native land to escape the hell which he declared the Russian Secret Police had made his life.

It took three months of intensive investigation to convince Larry Brandon that Slavsky was all the Secret Police had painted him and more, and that the Terrorist had not emigrated to America with even the remotest intention of reforming. It took the detective three months more to satisfy himself beyond all doubt that Slavsky had, marvelously enough, established an active branch of his old order and was undoubtedly spreading the doctrine of Gorgias and Fichte under the very noses of the Central Office experts. However, the evidence necessary to a conviction was lacking, so nothing could be done.

A little later the men of the same nationality as the Nihilist, whom Brandon had used to great advantage on the case, began, one by one, to drop quietly out of existence. This was not only mysterious—it was uncanny. Finally the decomposed bodies of some of these operatives were found and unmistakably identified.

In each instance *the head had been completely severed from the trunk.*

Recollecting that the Terrorist order, to which Paul Slavsky had belonged, had signalized its outrages by decapitating its victims. Brandon was enabled to initiate definite plans which, in due course, culminated in his running his man to earth.

But Paul Slavsky never beheld the fatal Chair nor served time. He chose the other route. He had elected to live in rebellion against man's orderly in-

stitutions, and in this same unreasoning revolt he resolved to die. Like most of his ilk, the Terrorist in physical combat was a hard man, and he really fought a great fight, but he fought it with a master craftsman in the conquering of such as he, and inevitably he lost, with many of Larry Brandon's bullets in his great body and only life enough left in him to greet—and almost at once to take final leave of—his favorite sister, Olga, who had arrived in Europe, a little late as it transpired, to join her brother in his sinister calling.

Olga Slavsky, years younger than her lamented brother, was as pretty a little specimen of dark-eyed femininity as ever enchanted fastidious masculine eye. Yet so is the tigress beautiful.

Still, that is not quite the idea I wish to convey. If you can think of a woman in repose being as beautiful as a tigress and, in smoldering hate and loathing as repulsive, as hideous as a preying vampire, then you will get nearer my meaning. Olga like her brother, was a staunch exponent of the Terrorist doctrine.

What Brandon expected soon came to pass. The strange girl, whom men called beautiful and women envied, was promptly elected to her brother's place in what was known in the underworld of unlawful secret orders as the "League." In this way she immediately crossed swords with the man who had ended the career of her brother Paul, and ere long she became aware, through members of the League detailed as spies, that still another noted criminologist, Joe Seagraves, was unpleasantly hot on her trail.

But Olga was undaunted. For daring and ingenuity, she by far eclipsed her cunning and resourceful brother, who had blazed the path of her iconoclastic pilgrimage.

Since little could thus far be proved against Olga, Seagraves believed that it might be better to declare a sort of armistice and, if possible, gradually win her over to the side of law and order. To this end, he openly called and laid his ideas before her. She frankly flouted his implied interest in her well-being, but showed a spirit of compromise by offering the crime specialist a cigarette.

In such a mood Olga became a docile and purring tiger kitten, only one never quite forgot her claws. She was highly superstitious, Seagraves discovered; but then her whole character was so anomalous and so replete with unexpectedly outcropping traits and wildly illogical beliefs that it was almost to be expected she would believe in ghosts.

She clung tenaciously to the belief, so Brandon told Seagraves, that some day Paul would *return* and end the life of the man who—the Terrorist had told his sister shortly before his death—had done him to death.

"Do you still believe, Olga, that Paul is going to come back one day and carry Brandon away with him into the Unknown?" asked Seagraves.

Olga's dark eyes grew suddenly darker as she slowly removed a cigarette from between her too red lips.

"Not only is he coming," she answered, "but he is coming *soon*. Only night before last I talk with him. I tell him hurry. You see his spirit cannot rest until his murder is—ah, my very bad English!—avenge'."

"You're a very foolish woman, Olga," admonished Seagraves. "If you refuse to listen to my warning you're going to find yourself in lots of trouble. I want you to understand that."

Then the drowsing tigress put out her claws.

"You threaten me!" she fairly hissed, tossing away her cigarette and rising. "I am a free woman. You are, after all, like my own people. You would make slaves of all who cannot buy their freedom of—of thought and action."

She glanced about queerly before she concluded:

"Don't interest yourself too far. You may be great, but remember—I am no longer to be despised. You have waited too long. Should I choose, for example, I could have shot you where you sit."

Joe Seagraves leaped out of his chair, an automatic in his experienced hand and menacing the mysterious woman steadily.

But already the allegorical vampire,

which the detective had seen reflected in Olga's piercing eyes and heard in her studied but crisp and stinging words, had spread its skinny wings and flown. Olga was laughing in such sincere, or well-feigned, mockery at his alarm that the dignified detective momentarily felt abashed.

He put his weapon away, nevertheless, only after a searching glance about the very ordinary little room in which the extraordinary woman had received him. He recalled that the last victim of Olga's brother, mutilated, headless and repellant, had been found in this same neighborhood, if not in this same house.

"Please—*please* forgive me," the strange girl was pleading. "You see, I forgot that you are not like—like Brandon. For him there is no forgiveness. He must perish. But we—you and I—why must we be enemies?"

"There's but one reason, Olga," replied Seagraves seriously, "and that is a strong one. It is simply the nature of our respective callings."

"Then I can only be sorry," she said in a low voice. "Still, my principles are more—what word?—more sacred than your friendship."

As the woman paused, Seagraves could have taken an oath that he caught the sound of whispering voices through a door standing slightly ajar not three paces from his elbow. Of a sudden, he stepped forward and flung the door wide with a resounding *bang*.

A gray-walled room, quite empty, was all that rewarded his examination. He turned and found Olga smiling again.

"Did you surprise them?" she inquired sweetly.

"Surprise whom?" demanded the detective.

"The rats," she said ingenuously, still smiling.

"I've seen but one rat here," murmured Seagraves in an impersonal tone; "I see it now. It has wings that fold up like an umbrella. It is called a vampire."

Olga smiled on placidly, even after Joe Seagraves had closed the door on her and was gone.

IN THE language of the man who knotted the noose, Olga, as her kind are certain to do, came at last to the end of her rope.

Conspiracy, blackmail and extortion were at last brought home to her; and it chanced that the same eminent crime expert who had hurried the career of her brother to an inglorious finish was likewise destined to be the instrument of fate in the undoing of Olga.

In time the pursuit narrowed down to the end of a most imperfect day for both quarry and hunters. Then all night, as Brandon and Seagraves gradually drew their web closer and ever closer about the elusive Terrorist, she tricked them at every angle and turn with the cunning of a fox, and it was not until three sleepless days and nights that the two renowned sleuths effected her capture more than five hundred miles distant from the field of her long-continued operations.

She'll be as slippery as an eel," Brandon warned Seagraves, when they were ready to start back with their prisoner. "I'll never consent to any Pullman for *her*, even though we ignore the law and handcuff her to the seat. One of us is going to have to keep his eyes on her constantly."

"Only one of us could sleep at a time, anyhow," said Seagraves; "and surely we can stand it one more night, don't you think? Suppose we both sit it out with her."

They at length did decide to "sit it out" with their prisoner, and with that understanding they took her aboard the train.

At the moment of entering the train, a telegram was handed to Brandon, and as soon as the three were comfortably seated in their section the inspector read it with lips compressed and eyes oddly squinted. Then he handed the message to Seagraves, who read:

> "Police record Olga Slavsky arrived. Wanted in three countries for complicity in murder nine counts. Escaped Russian Secret Police three times. At present fugitive from justice. Keep close watch on her. Renfrow, Chief Inspector."

Seagraves returned the telegram to Brandon, winking an eye disparagingly and smiling at what the Chief Inspector had evidently considered a necessary precaution.

The afternoon waned. Early evening found the train three-quarters of an hour behind time. If this kept up they would not arrive before two in the morning.

Olga sat besides Seagraves facing Brandon.

"I would give much for a cigarette," she announced out of a long silence at ten o'clock, addressing herself to Seagraves.

"This isn't a smoker," observed the crime specialist, glancing around, "but there are only two other passengers in the car. Try it."

He offered her his box, and she took one and lighted it. Filling her lungs with the comforting smoke, she exhaled it in a great cloud and, after a meditative pause, murmured:

"At last I am to see poor Paul."

She looked Seagraves steadily in the eye and added in a queer tone that she felt her brother was very near tonight.

It was a mixed train, and the day couches appeared to have much the better of the sleepers as to occupancy. Seagraves noted casually that, besides themselves, their car boasted but two other passengers, and though they might have been snugly asleep in their respective berths, they had apparently elected to sit out the short run, evidently preferring reclining to rising and dressing at 1:30 or 2 o'clock A. M.

"Do you see the man sitting all alone in the last seat with the handkerchief over his face, to keep the light out of his eyes?" Olga's ruminant voice finally broke in upon the monotonous *clackety-clack* of wheels upon rail-joints.

"Yes—what about him?" asked Seagraves.

"Nothing, only he—he looks like Paul," she answered in a guarded voice, as though she feared Brandon, cat-napping now, might overhear her strange language.

"Olga!" ridiculed the detective, "get a grip on yourself.

Having thus counseled the prisoner, Seagraves was thoughtful for a long space; then he looked over at Olga, saw an odd, uneasy expression on her pretty face and quickly said:

"Here—have another cigarette, Olga. Burn 'em up!"

AT MIDNIGHT the conductor passed through the car.

We'll make the city a little before two o'clock," he said in answer to a sleepy-voiced interrogation from Brandon, who seemed to have banished sleep and was blinking about the car.

"What—we all alone?" he asked Seagraves. Then he caught sight of the two lonely passengers at the far end of the car. "No; two others," he murmured, answering his own question.

He was turning his gaze away from the man with the handkerchief over his face when something, Seagraves noted, drew his eyes inquiringly back to the sleeper's hunched figure. The movement caused Seagraves to follow Brandon's scrutiny. He marked the fact that the handkerchief had fallen from their fellow-passenger's face, and —was it because of Olga's suggestion, or was it merely a silly midnight fancy?— he assuredly seemed to trace a certain vague resemblance between the solitary sleeper and the notorious Paul Slavsky, long ago dead.

The idea brought with it a queer, though distinct, sense of unpleasantness. The booming voice of Brandon, breaking in upon his wholly disagreeable train of thought, was highly reassuring.

"Huh!" laughed the Inspector, "I thought I recognized that chap."

At a quarter to one, Seagraves shook Brandon out of a doze and said, "Keep the lady company for a few minutes. I'm going into the smoker."

"All right, Joe," drawled Brandon, opening his slightly reddened eyes and seeming to be perfectly wide awake.

Seagraves disappeared into the smoking-room, returning some ten or fifteen minutes later. To his surprise he noted that Brandon, evidently not caring to take a chance on Olga's diving out of the open window, had handcuffed her fast to the seat and had once more

fallen asleep. Olga herself appeared a trifle more cheerful. She even smiled, though somewhat wearily, as Seagraves resumed his seat beside her.

"I told you it would be Paul," the woman whispered to Seagraves, as though determined to share no part of her secret with the despised Brandon. "See," she insisted, growing almost jubilant, "it is my brother Paul—come back to me at last!"

"For God's sake, Olga," cried Seagraves disgustedly, "stop that foolishness. It gets on my nerves."

Stillness then for several minutes.

Of a sudden Seagraves felt cold. He turned up his coat collar and, somehow rather depressed, sat looking across at the muffled figure of Brandon who, also evidently having felt the night chill, had wound a great muffler about his neck and pulled his ample Stetson low over his face. Seagraves reflected that this would be a fitting case with which to crown a long list of his old friend's successes. Tomorrow he would congratulate him.

A long wild shriek from the locomotive startled Seagraves like an unexpected blow.

"Ha!" he said, "I must be developing nerves after all these years. Anyhow, we're getting in."

Then he raised his eyes and saw that the man, who, he had imagined, resembled Paul Slavsky, had disappeared. So had the only other passenger who had occupied a seat near him. It struck Seagraves as singular.

Another long wail from the locomotive blent dissonantly with the dreary *clackety-clack, clackety-clack* of the car-wheels, and at the same instant the vestibule door was smashed open. Through it came stumbling, covered with blood, clothing torn to tatters, the identical man who had resembled Paul Slavsky.

His hands were securely cuffed, and he was being partly shoved and partly dragged forward along the aisle for all the world as though he were a wax dummy. His captor was no other than the traveler whom the detective had seen sitting near the dead Terrorist's double.

"He fought like a tiger, Mr. Seagraves, but I finally got him. He's one of Olga's bunch—a second brother of hers, in fact. He heard that she was hard pressed and just landed from Europe to help her escape."

Joe Seagraves sat like one stupefied. Jim McLean, of the Central Office, cleverly disguised as an innocent-looking rustic, had captured a third Slavsky, but how—where?

"It's all right," McLean was explaining. "You see, Ranfrow got wind of this fellow's game, got hold of a picture of him and sent me out to ride back with you and Brandon and the lady. I fell asleep in earnest, while pretending to be, and waked up just as my man was slipping out of the car. I got a good look at his face then and, recognizing him, made the first move in a scrap that lasted through six coaches and clear up to the coal-tender."

"Why was the man slipping out?" demanded Seagraves, perplexedly.

"Ah! that's it. I missed you from the car and suspected something wrong. Brandon seemed to be asleep and the woman was laughing. That was enough. I collared my man."

Joe Seagraves reached over and gently shook Brandon, who, still sleering like a rock, had slumped low down in the angle formed by the seat and the window.

"Come out of it!" the detective bawled at his companion, "we're getting in."

But Brandon slept on. Seagraves waited a moment, then shook him again, almost violently.

"Come on, Larry!" he said, himself rising.

But Brandon did not stir, and Seagraves darted a questioning glance at Olga, still handcuffed fast to the seat. To his amazement and alarm the woman was smiling, triumphantly, terribly. A vague surmise, which had come into Seagrave's head hours before, was now confirmed.

There was no doubting that leering and awful smile. She had bitten the blood from her carmine lips. Olga Slavsky had gone stark mad!

In all the years that followed, Joe

Seagraves was never able to free his memory from the haunting horror of the thing he beheld when, Brandon not reacting to violent shakes, he grew suspicious and lifted his unresponsive friend's big hat off his head—or rather off—*a vacant-eyed and staring dummy head!*

PAUL SLAVSKY had not *returned* as Olga had predicted he would, but a last gruesome reminder of his own hideous handiwork was nevertheless present.

When the first shock of horror had passed, and Seagraves and McLean again focused their incredulous eyes on Olga Slavsky, they knew that the woman, though handcuffed, had herself participated in this last act of terrorism in America. It was incredible, but there, before the detectives' eyes, were the facts themselves.

The blood from her bitten lips streaking her Patrician chin, Olga sat composedly folding and unfolding her daintily-patterned hands, quite as a vampire folds and unfolds its repellent wings; toying, as might a child, with the polished handcuffs which supposedly had held her a prisoner, and—before the amazed eyes of her beholders—*slipping the locked manacles on and off over her tiny, flexible hands!*

Unearth Vast Wealth in Egyptian Tomb

RARE treasures of art, priceless gems and the royal trappings of ancient times were discovered by archaeologists when they tunneled their way into the funeral chambers of King Tutankhamen [1358-1350, B. C.] in the Valley of Kings near Luxor, Egypt. Describing the discovery, Lord Carnarvon wrote to a Chicago newspaper correspondent:

"At last a passage was cleared. We again reached a sealed door or wall. We wondered if we should find another staircase, probably blocked, behind this wall, or whether we should get into a chamber. I asked Mr. Carter to take out a few stones and have a look in. He pushed his head partly into the aperture. With the help of a candle, he could dimly discern what was inside. . . . 'These are marvelous objects here,' he said.

"I myself went to the hole, and I could with difficulty restrain my excitement. At the first sight, with the inadequate light, all that one could see was what appeared to be gold bars. On getting a little more accustomed to the light, it became apparent that there were colossal gilt couches with extraordinary heads, boxes here and boxes there. We enlarged the hole and Mr. Carter managed to scramble in—the chamber is sunk two feet below the bottom passage—and then, as he moved around with a candle, we knew we had found something unique and unprecedented."

Among the many treasures which they found in the tomb were royal robes, embroidered with precious stones, the state throne of King Tutankhamen, portraits of the king and queen, incrusted with turquoises, lapis lazulli and other gems, two life-sized golden statues of the king, with gold scepter and mace, and four gem-studded chariots.

The HOUSE *of* DEATH

A Strange Tale

By F. GEORGIA STROUP

THE THREE women looked about the little kitchen. For some reason, each seemed to avoid the eyes of the other.

"My land, but it's hot in here!" Mrs. Prentis moved to the north window to raise it.

As she propped up the heavy sash with a thin board that lay on the sill, a gust of hot wind swept through the room from a drought-parched Kansas cornfield.

Seeking relief in action, her daughter, Selina, hastened to the opposite window and pushed it up, as a cloud of dust thickened in the road in front of the house. A small herd of bawling cattle were milling past the house in the heat and glare of the August sun. Their heads drooped dejectedly and their tongues lolled from parched mouths.

"My land, Seliny, there goes another bunch of cattle out west. Does beat all how hard 'tis to get water in this country. Jes' seems to me sometimes like I'd die for a sight of mountains an' green things an' a tumblin' little stream that'd run an' ripple all summer."

Motherly Mrs. Collins wiped the perspiration from her large, red face and fanned herself with her blue sunbonnet.

"Didn't Mamie Judy come from the mountain country?" she asked.

"Yes; we went to the same school. When she was a girl she had the blackest eyes and the prettiest red cheeks of any girl you ever did see. Didn't look much like she does now! A farmer's wife soon goes to pieces. She was such a lively girl, too—so full of fun. An' now jes' to think what the poor thing's come to!"

Again the three women avoided each other's eyes. Then Selina spoke nervously:

"Do you 'spose she did it, Ma?"

"There you go with your 'sposin' again! Better get to work and straighten up this house. That's what we come over for, ain't it?"

Mrs. Collins rose heavily from her chair and unrolled and donned a carefully-ironed, blue-checked apron.

"Seems kinda funny to have the funeral here, don't it?"

"Oh, I don't know. The graveyard's handy an' it's so far to the church."

"Yes, that's so; 'tain't far to the cemetery. Always seemed to me that Mamie'd found it kinda spooky, always seein' the graveyard right through that window there over the stove. Bein' up on top of that rise, an' only half a mile away, would make it seem to me kinda like livin' in a graveyard."

"Selina, take this here bucket an' bring in some water. My land, I don't see how Mamie ever got through with all her work an' took care of the baby. Her bein' so old, an' it her first, made

it harder, too. Never thought her an' Jed would have any children."

"Things do need reddin' up pretty considerable," spoke Mrs. Collins, as she picked up some odds and ends of clothing from a corner, where they had lain long enough to accumulate a coating of acrid dust.

"My jes' look at the linin' in this firebox! How d'you ever 'spose Mamie managed to cook on it?"

"Must have been pretty hard. She didn't have things fixed as handy as some of the rest of us, even. You see, they didn't have much money to spend on things. Farmin' in Kansas ain't been a payin' business the last few years. When 'tain't too wet, it's too dry, or too hot, or too cold, or somethin'."

"Yes, it seems like there's always somethin'. There—I've got that sweepin' done. We'll let Selina scrub, while we fix up the front room."

The two women opened the door into the "front" room. The blinds were tightly drawn and the musty odor testified to its lengthy isolation.

"MY LAND! look at that, will you?" Mrs. Prentis pointed to a cheap colored glass on the center-table, which held a pitiful little bouquet of one immortelle, six pale spears of a rank grass and a carefully-cut-out letterhead of a printed spray of orange blossoms.

"Who'd a thought of tryin' to make a bouquet out o'that? I remember, when we were back in Tennessee, that Mamie was always findin' the first deer's tongues and other kinds of little early flowers. Us big girls always helped fill her little hands. Seemed like she never could get all she wanted. An' then think of livin' out here where there ain't water enough for things that has to have it, let alone flowers. Why, I remember one summer when we even saved the dishwater to use several times, and then fed it to the pigs 'cause water was so scarce."

"Yes; the way farmer's wives have to worry 'long, 'tain't much wonder so many of 'em go crazy. I read in th' paper that was 'round a bundle that come from the store that a bigger part of farmers' wives went crazy than any other kind of women."

"Yes, I've heard that too. Let's jes' step in an' pick up in the bedroom, and then sweep both these rooms out together. The wind's in th' right direction."

"Yes, you come with me. We—we could get done sooner, workin' together." "That must be the pallet an' this th' pillow. They say the baby had been dead for several hours when Jed found it."

"Yes, an' Mamie settin' out there in the barn door, with her head in her lap. Not cryin' nor nothin'."

The two women hesitated, lingered at their task. Something kept them from moving the things that the coroner had kept in so rigidly exact a position.

"Yes; there's somethin' mighty queer about it. My land, jes' think, she might be—HUNG!" in a hoarse whisper.

Both faces blanched at the hitherto unspoken possibility. A woman—neighbor and friend, and the childhood acquaintance of one of them—was imprisoned on the charge of killing her baby.

They felt that they ought to have a feeling of horror. It was a terrible crime, with seemingly only one explanation, but to both there arose visions of the unexpected satisfying of the craving mother heart of the work-worn farm drudge; of her seeming happiness and joy at the little cuddling head in the hollow of her arm and the soft lips on the breast, as the little form was held tightly to its mother's bosom.

"I don't care what the coroner's jury said, I don't believe Mamie could 'a' done it. But still—if she didn't, who *did?*"

"Yes, an' then, if she didn't do it, why don't she say so? She knows they might hang her."

"They say she ain't said one word since Jed found her out there in the barn door. My land, but ain't it hot?"

"Yes, there bein' no trees 'round here, jes' seems like the sun bakes right through the roof. Well, we might as well begin to pick up. The funeral's

at ten tomorrow. I can come over early; can you?"

"Yes, I'll be here. I'm goin' to stay an' set up tonight. Mr. and Mrs. Shinkle said they'd come over. Selina can get supper for her pa an' th' boys."

"We'd better change them cloths."

The women tiptoed into the little lean-to, with that expectant hush that the presence of death always causes.

On an improvised table, a little form lay covered with a sheet, above a box of slowly melting ice. The country ministrations of neighborly service were completed, and the women left the room and returned to their task of cleaning in the front of the little farmhouse.

"My land, but it's quiet here! Bein' so far off the main road, seems like a person never sees nor hears nobody. It's enough to drive a person crazy."

THE older woman had been standing for several minutes, with her mind preoccupied by struggling thought. At last she spoke:

"See here, Mis' Prentis, if this pillow'd been standing up like this, it could've fell over on the baby. See?"

Both women bent over the carefully-folded bedclothing, placed upon the floor for the sake of a slightly cooler strata of air and also to obviate the possibility of the baby rolling off, while the mother was busy in some of the many tasks of the unaided farmer's wife.

Little by little, the bedroom was straightened and the two rooms swept and dusted. Then Mrs. Prentis paused as she gave a final look around the rooms, walked to one of the windows on the south and ran a speculative finger over the glass. It was so heavily coated with dust as to be practically opaque. Then she stepped to the two windows on the east side of the room and looked at them. The panes of glass in both were clean and carefully polished.

"Now why do you suppose that is?" she asked.

"Now why do you suppose that is?" Mrs. Collins, who had been following her moves, shook her head.

"I don't know," she answered, "Did you notice that the one in the kitchen, on the south side above the stove, hadn't been washed, either? I noticed it when I went over to look at the firebox when you spoke."

"Yes, that's so," said Mrs. Prentis, standing in the kitchen door and glancing at the south windows of one room and then at the other.

"See here, do you 'spose—that is—I mean both of these windows on the south side are toward the graveyard—do you 'spose that Mamie left 'em that way *on purpose*?"

"Well, there's a good deal to do on a farm, and mebbe she got as far as the south side washin' windows some day, and then had to quit for some reason."

"Yes, but these ain't been washed for *months*. Poor little Mamie! Mebbe she just couldn't stand to be everlastingly seein' them gravestones."

"I wish, oh *how* I wish, I'd 'a 'come over here oftener! We don't live so far away; but seems like I never get time to get all my work done, and when I do there's not time to walk, or I'm too tired, an' o' course the horses are always busy.

"What with fruit cannin', and hayin' hands, an' threshin', an' little chickens, the summer's gone 'fore you know it, an' then the winter's too cold and snowy, or too wet an' muddy to get out, an' the first thing you know another year's slipped by."

Motherly Mrs. Collins nodded her head in sympathy. An older and a heavier woman, all that Mrs. Prentis had said applied better than equally well to her.

"No wonder Mamie loved the baby so," she said, "though she ain't been overly strong since it was born. Jes' think of the years and years she was here all alone, for Jed used to work out a good deal an' she done all the work here. Years an' years of stillness—an' then the baby she'd never give up wantin' and hopin' for."

"Yes, when I think what a woman's got to go through here on a farm, I don't never want Selina should get married. Seems like it's enough sometimes to make a mother wish her girl baby could die when it's little—"

She gasped. Both women gave a frightened start.

"No; 'course I don't mean that," she added hastily. "I jes' mean you love 'em so that it don't seem no ways right for 'em to have to grow up to what you see in front of 'em."

"Well, we better quit talkin' an' lay out th' baby's things. 'Spose we look in the bureau in the bedroom."

They moved again to the inner room and pulled out the top drawer of the old-fashioned marble-topped bureau.

A few shirts, a pile of carefully mended underwear and some socks, rolled and turned together in two's, met their gaze.

"That's Jed's drawer. Let's see what's in the next one."

The second drawer revealed a freshly-ironed white waist carefully folded above a meager pile of woman's underwear. Without a word, Mrs. Prentis pushed it shut.

The third drawer proved to be the one they wanted. Small piles of carefully made baby clothing of cheap material but workmanship of infinite pains, met their view.

Mrs. Collins wiped the tears from her cheeks with the corner of her apron.

"See—they're nearly ever'one made by hand and all white. Most of 'em jes' flour sacks, but look how Mamie's bleached 'em. An', see this drawn-work."

As she spoke, she placed a work-reddened hand beneath a narrow strip of openwork.

"Yes, you can go home now," in answer to a question from Selina in the kitchen.

"My, the pains she's took on all these little things! Seems 's if she must 'a' been gettin' 'em ready all these years, an' now—" Her voice trailed off into silence.

The little clothing was laid on the bed in readiness for the morrow, and the women looked about as though hunting something more to do. Used to the busy hours of farm life, they felt impelled to some task that would occupy the passing hours.

"Let's see if there's anything we ought to do upstairs."

They climbed the narrow ladderlike stairway to an unfinished half-story garretlike room above.

MY LAND, she was house-cleanin' this hot weather!"

Half of the stuffy little room had been thoroughly overhauled and the other end begun. A little old horsehair trunk stood in the middle of the floor, with portions of its contents scattered about.

"I'll bet she was goin' to empty that for the baby's things. I showed her mine, jes' like it, that I fixed up for Selina when she was little."

"Well, we might as well pick up the things and put 'em back," said orderly Mrs. Collins, who suited the word to the action by laboriously bending with a slight grunt.

Mrs. Prentis pushed her back.

"Here, let me pick 'em up. There ain't no call for you to go stoopin' 'round in this heat. First thing you know you'll be havin' a stroke."

Some clothing and small articles were collected, and several bundles of yellowed old letters lay on the floor. From one of the packages the string had broken, evidently when it had been lifted from the trunk. One letter lay crumpled near its empty envelope, where it had been dropped.

With a wondering glance, the two women smoothed it out. The first paragraph was so yellowed and faded as to be illegible, but part of the second paragraph had been protected by the folded paper and they could read:

" . . . will say that your wife is hopelessly insane. She may live for years, but will never regain her mentality, as cases like hers are incurable. We find upon investigation that the women of her family, for several generations, have become hopelessly insane at her age.

"In view of the fact that your small daughter is tainted with this inherited insanity, we strongly advise you to take her to some new environment and, when she grows older, explain to her why marriage

should be considered impossible for her.

"As we can see the matter now, it is too bad that her mother was not warned of the same fact, and in view of all our information it would seem to have been better if we had not pulled her through that severe illness. If you—"

The remainder of the letter was undecipherable. The two neighbors looked at each other, their eyes wide with horror. At last Mrs. Prentis gasped hoarsely:

"Do you 'spose that bundle broke open and Mamie read this letter? Her father died 'fore she was old enough to marry and left her this place partly paid for, and I remember when her and Jed was married how they planned to pay the rest of it off jes' as soon as possible."

"But," interrupted Mrs. Collins, "the coroner's jury said yesterday that they wasn't any manner of doubt but that she *wasn't* crazy. She jes' set there, with her solemn big eyes, and looked straight ahead and never said a word.

"I wonder how a woman'd feel to know that the baby girl she loved better'n her own life would have to grow up in this drudgery and then finally spend the last of her years in a 'sylum?"

"Yes and 'spose Mamie went crazy herself long 'fore the little girl grew up?"

"I wonder if a woman really loved her baby girl if she wouldn't rather—" she stopped once more with a frightened look.

Wheels were heard coming down the lane.

Mrs. Prentis spoke quickly: "Sarah Ann Collins, we're goin' right downstairs and stick this letter in that cookstove, quick!"

IN THE little kitchen below, the women were cooking supper when the county attorney and another man entered.

"Good evening, ladies," said the attorney. "We decided to come out again and go carefully over the field to see if we could find any evidence. You haven't, by chance, found anything, have you?"

Mrs. Prentis looked covertly at Mrs. Collins, then answered:

"No; we jes' been cleanin' up. We ain't been lookin' for no evidence."

"Well, Walters," said the attorney, "you know juries when it comes to women. If there never is found a definite reason for her wanting the baby to die, no jury will ever believe she is guilty."

"Evil Demon" Drives Man to Orgy of Crime

SPURNED by his young niece, Estanislao Puyat, a Filipino, ran amuck in the streets of Manila, after throwing the girl from an upper window to the ground and almost killing her. Grabbing his bolo, he rushed down the street, stabbed an aged woman in the eye, cut off the hands of two other women, slashed another, stabbed a Chinese merchant and a cart driver, cut another woman on the forehead, wounded a child and a young Filipino girl, and then, reaching the Bay, threw himself into the water in an effort to commit suicide. Capt. H. H. Elarth threw a noose over his head and dragged him ashore. The Filipinos say that Puyat was "de malas," meaning he was possessed of an evil demon.

A Five-minute Story

The Gallows

By I. W. D. PETERS

TOMORROW morning, at sunrise, I am to hang for the murder of a man.

At sunrise on the ninth of June, the anniversary of my wedding day. I am to be hanged by the neck until I am dead.

I am glad this state has not yet adopted the use of electricity in executions. I prefer to spend my last moments out in the open under the sky.

The building of the gallows is finished; the workmen are gone, and it seems that the execution at sunrise is certain to take place; but every step along the corridor sends my heart into my mouth. Gladys is working for a reprieve. I am praying she will not succeed.

The Governor is off on a fishing trip, away from railroad and telegraph. If they do not locate him in the next few hours I shall be hanged. God grant they fail to find him!

It is Glady's will against mine. She usually wins, but every passing minute lessens her chance to have her way in this. It is now ten minutes to midnight. Dr. Brander, the prison chaplain, has just left me, gratified, poor fellow, that he has succeeded in reconciling me to my fate. If he had known that the tall skeleton of wood outside, with its lank line of rope, was in my mind a refuge, he would have turned from me in horror.

The next five hours will be the longest of my life. Every step in the corridor strikes fear to my heart. It is not because I am guilty of the crime, for which I was sentenced, that I am glad to die. I *am* guilty, but that doesn't mean that I deserve to die.

I am going to hang tomorrow at sunrise because *I want to be hung!*

I could have saved myself, but refused to do so, solely because life had lost its savor, a great wave of disgust with living possessed and still possesses me. I am writing these words now that Gladys may know the truth. She has tried to see me, ever since I was brought here, and I have refused to be seen. That is one right a condemned man has—to refuse to see visitors.

FROM the day we were married, Gladys demanded to know my every thought, my every act every hour of the day.

If every one of them was not concerned with her she criticised, condemned or cried. She resented, in bitterly-spoken words and equally bitter acts, the small recesses of my soul that I, for the sake of my own self-respect, kept to myself.

Finally she determined to show me that there were other men who appreciated her, if I did not. For a while, after that, all hours of the day and evening my home was infested with lounge lizards. I endured it without a word, which infuriated her.

Lester Caine, a young fellow, honest and simple, was her first victim. The first time I found him seated close beside her on the dimly lit porch I wel-

comed him warmly. We smoked and talked of our days in the army together. I felt that Gladys could safely enough flirt with such as Lester, if that was what she wanted; but Lester called only a few times after that.

For two months there was a succession of young fellows about the place. Our house was not far from the Westmoor Country Club, and the golf links came almost up to our side-yard. Our porch was a convenient place to "drop in."

Suddenly all that sort of thing ceased. Gladys was away a great deal, but as her mother lived in a town just a few miles away I thought nothing of that. She became very quiet, was thoughtful, absent-minded, flushed easily, seemed not herself.

At first I was a good deal puzzled, then, suddenly an explanation for the change in her dawned on me. Joy filled my soul. I was inordinately gentle with her, bought her a small automobile for her birthday, did everything I could think of for her comfort and pleasure.

After all, I told myself, the emotional phase she had passed through was natural. Marriage is a more difficult readjustment with some than others. It had evidently been so with Gladys. If a child came to us it would make everything right.

A child—*our child!* It was wonderful to think of. She had always refused to consider the subject saying she wished to enjoy life while she was young. But she knew I wanted a son to bear my name, a daughter to inherit her beauty, and she had accepted the inevitable. A wave of exaltation made me feel as if I were treading on clouds. I longed to mention the subject to her, but I felt that the first word about it should come from her.

I spent hours thinking of tender, loving things to do for her. She accepted everything quietly, sometimes with averted face and flushed cheeks. I would draw her inert figure into my arms and hold her close, but she made no response to my demonstrative affection.

At this stage of affairs my firm sent me on a ten-day trip to close a Western deal. It was hard to leave Gladys, but now, more than ever, I felt that we would need money, and lots of it.

We arranged for Gladys to go to her mother's, and I was to join her there on my return.

It is the same old story. I came home before I was expected, and went straight to our cottage, with the intention of having Gladys's room redecorated before bringing her home.

At the gate stood Gladys' car. I rushed into the house, but there was no one on the lower floor, nor in Gladys' room, nor mine. I was about to descend the stairs when I heard a low laugh—a man's laugh—from the third floor. I dashed up there and stood gazing at the closed door of the spare room.

"What's the idea, running away from me?" asked the man. "You can't blow hot and cold with me."

"I told you not to come here again. It's not safe."

"I'm not afraid of that husband of yours. You're mine, and you're going to stay mine."

I had listened intently, but could not recognize the man's voice.

"Go now," pleaded Gladys, "and I'll come to your rooms this evening."

"Not on your life! I'm here now, and I am going to stay."

"Let go of me—you are hurting my shoulder."

There was a sound of scuffling. I tried the door. It was locked. I put my shoulder to it. The lock snapped.

Gladys gave a cry, leaped away from the man—a man whom I had never seen before. The full-lipped, black-browed type, big, soft. As I took in the scene—the tousled woman, the flushed-faced man—a great wave of disgust almost overwhelmed me.

"Well," said the man, sneeringly, "what are you going to do about it?"

"If you take her away now and treat her right—nothing."

"And if I don't take her away?"

"I'll meet that situation when it comes."

"It has come," he said, with a laugh, and walked out.

I am tall, slender, delicate-looking, but I knew I was a match for that overfed brute.

I listened to the clatter of his feet on the stairs. Then I followed him.

THE man was hastening toward a street car.

I cranked Gladys' car and followed. It was easy to keep the street car in sight and to keep an eye on his sleek black head.

He left the car at Hanson Street. I, without a glance toward him, kept on ahead. I turned at the corner, in time to see him enter an office building. I was not far behind him when he took the elevator. The man in the elevator gave me the number of his office.

He was telling a joke to his typist as I entered, but his laughter died when he saw me.

"You dirty theif! You'll never cheat another man out of money!"

His look of astonishment, as I shouted these words, was amusing. He tried to give blow for blow, but I meant what I said when I shouted at him "I've come here to kill you!"

To choke the life out of an overfed beast is not so hard to an infuriated man. In less than a quarter of an hour he was dead. The police, for whom the typist had called, filled the room even before I had straightened my dishevelled clothing.

I practically tried my own case, and I was skillful enough to make every word, apparently uttered in my own defense, sound black against me.

Gladys tried to save me by telling the true story of the affair, but I made a picture of her as a devoted, self-sacrificing wife, willing to ruin even her spotless name to save her husband. I enjoyed seeing her cringe as I did this.

So skillfully had she and the big brute managed that there was not a bit of evidence to substantiate her story. On the other hand, there was the typist's story to help me, and, too, it was known I had speculated in the past, and that I had lost some money.

I made the most of everything against me, and it was enough. I was sentenced to hang on the ninth day of June at sunrise.

Gladys came to the jail to see me while the trial was going on, but I managed to act just as if my story were the true one and hers the false, and, though she pleaded with me to let the truth come out, I would not admit that the truth had *not* come out. The sentence was a terrible shock to her. Her mother carried her from the court-room in a faint. Before she recovered I was in prison.

I SHALL welcome the hour of sunrise as I never welcomed any moment of my life.

Not until then will the fear of a reprieve leave me. Gladys is moving heaven and earth to locate the Governor. God grant that she does not succeed!

It is four forty-five. I have spent much time at the window, gazing out into the darkness. What comes after death? That is the question, I suppose, that all men ask at the end of life. I have never done so. It is a futile question—one which none of us can answer. But I believe there will be surcease from the nausea that comes to those who have known disillusion and disappointment.

Ten minutes of five—now surely I am safe from even a chance of a reprieve!

Footsteps in the corridor! Is it my escort to the gallows, or—what I fear most on earth?

A STATEMENT by the warden of Larsen Penitentiary:

"If Traylor had spent the brief period, always alloted to a criminal for a few last words, his reprieve would have reached us in time to stay the execution; but he walked calmly, unfalteringly up to the gallows and helped us, with steady hands, adjust the cap and ropes—as he was dead two minutes before the Governor's message reached us."

For a Grim Tale With a Terrifying End We Recommend

The SKULL

By HAROLD WARD

KIMBALL held up his hand, warningly.

"Listen!" he exclaimed in a whisper.

Then he shoved the bottle back from his elbow and reached for his revolver, which hung just above the table. Buckling the belt about his waist, he leaped for the door and threw it open.

The house, raised on pile foundations a dozen feet above the ground, shook beneath the rush of retreating footsteps. With the swiftness of a wild animal, he gathered himself for the spring—and landed squarely astride the back of the last of the blacks to quit the place.

The weight of the white man brought the native to the ground. Seizing the black by the hair, he jerked him to his feet, keeping the naked body between himself and the crowd that lurked in the darkness, just beyond the ring of light that shone down through the open door.

"What name?" he demanded in the *beche-de-mer* of the Islands. "What for you come around big fella house? I knock seven bells out of you quick!"

Still grasping the man's kinky wool with his left hand, his right shot out, landing a terrific blow on the native's mouth. The black, spitting blood and broken teeth, squirmed in agony and attempted to give a side glance at his fellows. Seeing that none intended to aid him, he jerked his head to one side in an effort to escape. The white man straightened it with another blow.

"What name?" he demanded again.

"Me good fella boy," the black answered with an effort. "Me fella missionary!"

"Then you say one fella prayer damn quick!"

Kimball rained blow after blow on his face. The savage shrieked with agony. In the shadow, the blacks shuffled uneasily, like a herd of cattle ready to stampede, but the white man seemingly gave them no heed.

At last, the punishment completed, he jerked the bow and arrows from the unresisting hand of his victim and, whirling him suddenly, gave him a kick and a shove which landed him on all fours in the midst of the others. Then, turning, seemingly ignoring the thoroughly frightened blacks, he reëntered the house.

Throwing the bow and arrows on the table, he poured himself a stiff drink of gin and downed it at a gulp. And

then, sitting down beside the table, he picked up the weapon and examined it gingerly.

"Poisoned!" he remarked casually to the man lying on the bed. "I knocked bloody hell out of Tulagi as a lesson to the rest of 'em. They're getting insolent, with only one of us to handle 'em. Wish to heaven you were up and around again."

"Upon the platform, eh?" the sick man listlessly inquired.

Kimball nodded.

"They're gettin' bold," he said shortly. "Five hundred niggers are too many for one man to keep straight. It's been plain hell since you went down—and then the dog had to turn up his toes. When Donaldson comes in next week with the *Scary-Saray* we'll have to send after a new nigger-chaser. Chipin's got a couple extra ones he's been trainin' over at Berande."

The sick man rolled over with a groan.

"Thank heaven I was taken sick!" he remarked bitterly. "It's hard, God knows, but it gave me a chance to find out just what sort of a cur you are, Kimball."

Kimball scowled. He half opened his mouth as if to answer. Then, thinking better of it, he poured himself another drink and resumed his occupation of examining the weapon he had taken from the native. He swayed slightly in his chair under the load of liquor he was carrying, yet his voice was unblurred as, after a minute's silence, he looked across at the other.

"Can't you get that out of your head, Hansen?" he remarked. "I'm getting bloody well fed up on it."

Hansen raised himself on an elbow and angrily shook his fist at the other.

"Oh, you're 'getting bloody well fed up on it,' are you?" he mimicked. "I should think you would be! I suppose I'm hurtin' your delicate feelings by mentioning it to you, eh? It's nothing a man should howl about, is it?—having one he thought was his best friend pull off a dirty stunt like that!"

Kimball poured himself another drink. His hand shook slightly as he raised the glass to his lips.

"Oh, forget it and go to sleep!" he growled.

"Yes, 'forget it,' you damned crooked, lyin', double-crosser! I'm apt t' forget how you wrote to Gladys and told her I'd taken a nigger wife! Wanted her yourself, didn't you, you low-down, gin-guzzling rat! It was just a piece of luck that I was taken sick and you had t' look after the plantation instead of goin' after th'mail last time, or I'd never have got that letter from her telling me why she'd turned me down."

"I'm telling you now, for th' last time, that I didn't write that stuff to her!" Kimball snarled back. "I'm tellin' you it's a lie. I showed you the letter I wrote to her, giving her my word of honor that somebody'd been doin' you dirt."

"Who else is there here on the Islands that knew her back home?" Hansen demanded, dropping back onto the pillows again. "And who else knew that we were engaged?"

"How in hell do I know?" Kimball answered thickly, reaching unsteadily for the bottle. "You're a sick man, Hansen, or I'd beat you up for th' way you're talkin' to me."

The sick man raised himself from the pillows again with a snort of anger, his face flushed, his eyes gleaming feverishly.

"It's a long road that's got no turn in it!" he muttered. "It's my money that's in this plantation, Kimball—my money against your experience. And keep that damned arrow pointed th' other way, you fool! You're drunk—too drunk to be monkeyin' with weapons. You'd just as soon shoot me as not; if you do, I'll get you if I have to come back from th' grave to do it! And remember this, Kimball: Soon' I'm able to be up and around again, we'll have a settlement. And out you'll go from this plantation, you—"

Whether it was an accident, or plain murder nobody knows. Kimball was drunk—beastly so. The arrow was loaded in the bow and clasped between his trembling fingers, the bow-string taut. And Hansen had annoyed him, angered him, bullied him, cursed him. At any rate, as he slumped forward in

his chair, the bow-string slipped from between his thumb and finger, and—

Hansen dropped back onto the pillows with a smothered scream, the arrow buried deep in his temple!

II.

IT WAS past midnight when Kimball awoke from his drunken stupor.

For an instant, he had no recollection of what had happened. The oil lamp still burned brightly, throwing the figure of the man on the bed in bold relief.

Kimball half arose on his tiptoes so as not to awaken Hansen. His foot touched the bow lying on the floor. Then a flood of realization swept over him. He suddenly remembered that he was a murderer.

Whether he had killed Hansen intentionally or not he was unable to recall. Memory had ceased on the second he sprawled forward, his tired brain benumbed with the liquor he had consumed during the evening. He knew that they had quarreled—that Hansen had been more abusive than usual and had cursed him.

He stepped across to the bed. A single glance at the bloated face already turning black—at the glassy eyes staring back at him fixedly—told him that his surmise had been correct; the arrow had been dipped in poison. He shuddered as he pushed the remaining arrows, which he had taken from Tulagi, to the back of the table and poured himself another drink.

He must act at once. Donaldson and the *Scarg-Saray* would arrive within a few days. And Donaldson was no fool. Nor was Svensen, his mate. Both of them knew that there was bad blood between the partners. And should one of the house boys find the body in the morning it would cause no end of talk among the niggers. Some of them would be certain to talk to Donaldson. The big trader might be able to put two and two together and take his suspicions to the authorities.

Reaching up, he pulled down his revolver and, buckling the belt around his waist, tiptoed to the door. The rain was falling in torrents, and the sound of the surf was booming loudly. The sky was split by lightning, while the thunder rolled and grumbled.

It was a typical island squall; he knew it would last but a short time. Yet, while it lasted, the blacks would all be under cover, making him safe from spying eyes if he acted at once.

But fear—fear of he knew not what—caused him to pull down the shades until not a vestage of light showed at sides or bottom.

Then, nerving himself with another pull at the bottle, he turned down the lamp until the room was in semi-darkness. Again he stepped to the door and, holding it open an inch or two, listened.

Satisfied, he returned to the bed and picked up the dead form of Hansen and threw it across his shoulder with a mighty effort. He extinguished the lamp with a single puff as he passed the table.

Then, feeling his way carefully with his feet lest he strike against some piece of furniture in the darkness, he sought the door.

Bending his body against the force of the wind, he gained the steps and dodged around the corner of the house opposite the blacks' quarters. At the edge of the cocoanut grove, he again paused to listen.

Not a sound came from the direction of the black barracks. Presently, beating against the wind, he see-sawed through the grove for a quarter of a mile.

Satisfied that he was far enough from the house, he dropped his ghastly burden to the ground and turned back. The storm would obliterate his tracks by morning. With the coming of daylight, he would give the alarm, as if he had just discovered the absence of Hansen.

He had gone over the whole thing in his mind as he struggled along. It would be easy enough to foist his story upon the simple-minded blacks. He would tell them that the sick man had gotten up in the night and wandered away. Fevers are common in the Islands; so, too, is delirium. And, when the body was found with the arrow in

the skull. they would believe that their master had fallen a victim to some wandering savage.

There were half a dozen runaways—deserters from the plantation—hiding back in the bush. afraid to go into the hills for fear of the ferocious hill men and, at the same time, fearful of the punishment certain to be meted out to them should they return to the plantation. One of them would be blamed for Hansen's death. The blacks would vouch for such a story when he told it to Donaldson and Svensen upon their arrival.

He had covered a small part of the distance back to the house, his head bent low in thought, when a rustling among the palms at his right caused him to turn suddenly. As he did so, a spear whizzed past his head. imbedding itself in the tree beside him.

Whirling, he drew his revolver and pumped the clip of shells in the direction from which the spear had been thrown. It was too dark to make for good shooting; and an instant later a flash of lightning showed him a naked figure dodging behind a tree in the distance. Too late. he realized that he had left the house without an extra clip of cartridges. Unarmed, he broke into a run, dodging here and there among the long avenues of trees until he reached the edge of the grove.

The blacks were already tumbling out of their quarters, chattering excitedly.

"Ornburi!" he snapped at one of the houseboys. "You tell 'm fella boys sick marster, him run away. Got devil-devil in head. Me go after him. Meet bad black fella. Black fella kill him mebbe You look. You catch 'm black fella, plenty *kai-kai* in morning, no work, plenty tobacco—plenty everything!"

As Ornburi stepped forward. proud of being singled out from among his fellows, and explained to the late comers what had happened. Kimball dashed back up the steps and into the house. Returning an instant later with his rifle and bandolier of cartridges, he found the blacks arming themselves with their native weapons, squealing and chattering their glee at the prospect of the man-hunt and the holiday to follow in case of their success.

In spite of his efforts to maintain some semblance of order, however, assisted by the elated Ornburi, it was nearly daylight when the expedition was ready to start. The rain was nearly over, but a glance showed him that the night's downpour had completely washed out the trail he had made. Dodging here and there among the trees, savagely alert for their hidden enemies, it was almost an hour before the natives had covered the distance that Kimball, loaded down as he had been, had covered in twenty minutes.

The body of Hansen lay where he had thrown it.

But the head had been hacked off!

III.

IN HIS own mind, Kimball had no doubt as to the identity of the black who had hurled the spear at him in the darkness. for a checkup of the laborers showed Tulagi missing.

Bitter at the trouncing Kimball had administered, the native had bolted. Hiding in the darkness, nursing his anger, fate had thrown in his way the man who had whipped him. The same fate had caused him to miss his mark when he had thrown the spear.

And Tulagi was of a tribe that believed in taking heads for souvenirs.

With the coming of Donaldson and Svensen in the *Scary-Saray* three days later, giving him enough white aid to handle the plantation without fear of an uprising. Kimball renewed the search for the runaway. Tulagi, at large, would be a constant menace, not only to his own safety, but to the peace and quiet of the blacks. The runaway was a man of considerable influence among the others, and there was already too much dissatisfaction among the laborers to allow any additional trouble to creep in.

The body of the murdered Hansen had been decently buried close to the edge of the cocoanut grove under Kimball's direction.

Donaldson and Svensen never for a moment doubted his story, which was

corroborated by Ornburi and the blacks. Such things are not uncommon among the Islands. Both volunteered to aid him in running down the supposed murderer. For the supremacy of the white man must be maintained for the common good of all.

It was near the end of the second day that they found that for which they were searching. Beside a skeleton lay a skull, the point of an arrow driven through the temple. A great ant hill close by told a grisly story.

That one of Kimball's bullets had found its mark there was little doubt. Tulagi, wounded nigh unto death, had, nevertheless stopped long enough to hack off the ghastly souvenir, then made his way back toward the hills as best he could.

Exhausted from loss of blood, he had dropped, only to fall a victim to the ants.

IV.

AS THE three white men made their way toward the clearing, the sight of a schooner anchored close to the *Scary-Saray* met their gaze. Drawn up on the beach, close to the house, was a whale boat.

"From the looks of her, that'll be Captain Grant's *Dolphin* from Malatita," Donaldson remarked, shading his eyes from the glare of the sun. Didn't know he ever got this far. Wonder if his daughter's with him? Ever see her, Kimball? She's a peach!"

Before Kimball, walking slightly behind the others and carrying the skull, could make a reply, a man and woman emerged from the house to meet them. Donaldson turned quickly.

"That's her!" he exclaimed. "Prettiest girl on the Islands. Hide that damned skull, Kimball! It's no sight for a woman of her breeding to see."

They were a scant hundred yards apart now, the girl waving her handkerchief to them.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't stay at home to welcome your guests, Karl" she called out. "And Fred Hansen—where is he?"

Kimball strode ahead of the others.

"Gladys!" he exclaimed.

"Hide that damned skull, I tell you!" Donaldson growled in an undertone.

They were almost together now. Kimball shoved the skull under his coat. As he did so, it nearly dropped from his sweaty hands and, in an effort to hold it, his finger slid into one of the eyeless sockets.

The point of the arrow, protruding through the bone, scratched his skin. For the moment he forgot it in the happiness of meeting the woman he loved.

"Dad wanted to make a trading trip out this way, and brought me along for company," she was saying, as he stepped forward to grasp her outstretched hand. "Say that you're surprised to see me."

Before she could reach him, his legs doubled under him and he fell forward. The skull, dropping from beneath his coat, rolled and bounded half a dozen yards away, bringing up at the foot of a little hummock.

They leaped forward to catch him as he fell. But to late. With a mighty effort he raised himself to his knees.

"Hansen!" he screamed. "I killed him! He swore that he'd get even, and he has! *The—damned—thing—was poisoned!*

He pitched forward onto his face.

At the foot of the hummock, the skull grinned sardonically.

A Novelette of Weird Happenings—

The Ape-Man

By J. B. M. CLARKE, JR.

"LET'S GO and call on him now then," said Norton in his impulsive way, rising and crossing to the window.

The fine rain, which had been swishing intermittently against the panes with each gust of wind, had ceased for some time, and as Norton lifted the blind and peered forth he got the first glimpse of a wan moon struggling through an uneven copper-edged break in the swift-moving clouds.

"I was to have gone over there this evening," he said, "but 'phoned the engagement off on account of the storm. However, it's not too late . . ."

It did not take much persuasion to induce Meldrum to consent, for, although a year or two Norton's senior and inclined in consequence to give him paternal advice now and again, he generally indulged his whims.

"You can't break a teacher of the lecturing habit," was the way Norton expressed it.

He himself was an architect, and both were single men, although Norton was striving hard to build up a connection that would enable him to marry one of the prettiest girls in town, with whom he was then "keeping company." Meldrum locked the door of his apartment behind him, and the pair sallied forth into the fresh damp air of a night in early spring.

"After all you have told me, I am rather curious to see your South African friend again," said Meldrum, setting his pace with his friend's. "While no doubt an interest in animals is wholesome enough, his particular taste seems to run unpleasantly to apes and monkeys. Some of those experiments of his, of which you spoke, seem rather purposeless—making baboons drunk for instance . . ."

"If you could have seen him when he was telling me about that baboon business you would have taken a dislike to him too," said Norton, making a gesture of displeasure with his hand. "Although I will admit I had an aversion toward him from the first—I didn't quite know why. He had a trick of laying his hot heavy hand on my shoulder that used to irritate me dreadfully when we were in the Inspection Department in Washington."

"What was he doing there?" asked Meldrum.

"He had been inspecting aeroplane spruce in British Columbia," replied Norton, "and he had a desk in our office. I was there for about three months after being invalided home, before I was sent to New York."

After a few moments silence, Norton added:

"He is more than queer. He is a throw-back."

"A what?" said Meldrum, puzzled.

"A throw-back—an ataristic specimen," said Norton firmly. "A mixture of old and new, and a bad one at that.

"That's a pretty nasty accusation, Harry," said Meldrum.

"You may think so," said Norton obstinately, "but I tell you I'm not simply guessing. Apart from his peculiar build, with his monstrous length of arm and leg, short body, and small head, and his perpetual and unnatural theories and experiments with apes and things, there is still further evidence that I saw with my own eyes when we went to New York together one week-end and visited the zoo. It was not my fancy, I can assure you, Meldrum, that made me imagine the very brutes were interested in my companion. I tell you, there was scarcely one of those creatures that did not show excitement of some kind, some of rage, others of fear, but generally of anger.

"One big chipanzee went simply wild for a time—so much so that an attendant came along to see what the trouble was. It capered furiously, thundered at the bars of its cage, and then executed a hideous kind of cluttering dance, beating its hands and feet on the floor with extraordinary rapidity. Yet all Needham had done was to make a peculiar kind of clucking noise in his throat and smile his sinster smile. I'll bet the brutes recognized him as one of their kind. Some of them looked as if they expected him to open the cage doors . . . "

"What is he doing here in Burlington now?" asked Meldrum.

"Something in connection with lumber, I believe," said Norton, as they entered North Avenue and turned in the direction of the park. "He has rented a small house out here on this street and lives there alone. He seems to prefer being alone always."

They walked on for some little distance, and then Norton said, "This is the place," and indicated a small two-story residence standing alone in a neat garden some twenty yards from the thoroughfare.

It was quite dark save for one lighted window upstairs. The pair went up the path to the front door and Norton, after a little fumbling, found and pressed an electric button, without, however, producing any effect as far as could be observed.

"The bell doesn't seem to ring," said Norton, pressing again and again. "Perhaps it's out of order."

He knocked at the door and listened. Everything was quiet inside. Heavy drops of water splashed down from the roof, intensifying the silence. A trolley-car hummed past on the street, throwing a brilliant light on the trees and shrubs of the garden, and then leaving them darker than ever. Again Norton knocked loudly, but without result.

"That's not his bedroom, I know," he said, nodding up at the lighted room, "for he told me he hated the noise of the cars passing under his window. He must have fallen asleep over a book or something. I might throw a stone at the window."

"No I wouldn't do that," said Meldrum, walking back a few paces and staring up. "Perhaps we had better just go away. I can meet him again."

"But I would like you to see him, now that you've come," said Norton. "Wait a minute."

He tried the door and found it unlocked. Entering the hall, he called:

"Needham, Ho, Needham!"

Again they listened, and again nothing happened. As he groped in the darkness, Norton's hand encountered the electric switch and he turned on the light. A narrow stairway was revealed, leading overhead.

"Just wait a minute," he said to Meldrum, "and I'll run upstairs. I'm sure he's there."

He disappeared swiftly, and, after an interval of a few moments, came quietly down again.

"Come up," he said, beckoning to his friend. "He is sound asleep in his chair. Come and look."

II

TOGETHER they crept up. The room door was ajar, and they noiselessly entered what was evidently a sitting-room. Needham sat in a large arm-chair, with his back to the window, sleeping quietly. A reading lamp on

the table was the sole source of illumination, and, since it was fitted with a heavy red shade, the upper portion of chamber was in comparative darkness.

The full light of the lamp, however, fell upon the form of the sleeping man, who had sunk low in his chair and was indeed in an extraordinary attitude. His book had fallen to the floor, and his long arms hung over the sides of the chair, the hands resting palm upwards on the rug. His huge thighs sloped upward from the depths of the chair to the point made by his knees, and his long shins disappeared below the table.

Norton glanced at Meldrum, who was looking at the sleeper curiously.

"Ho, Needham!" said Norton, loudly. "Wake up!"

The slumberer was roused at last, but in a startling manner. With a lightning movement, he sat bolt upright and clutched the arms of the chair, his features working convulsively, while a stream of horrible gibberish, delivered in a high piercing tone, burst from his lips. Norton went as pale as death, while Meldrum remained rooted to the spot where he stood.

Then, recovering himself, Norton ran forward and, seizing Needham by the arm, shook him violently, exclaiming:

"It's all right, Needham! It's only Norton come to see you."

The man in the chair regained his composure as quickly as he had lost it, and, if unaware that anything unusual had happened, got to his feet and said:

"Hullo, Norton, old chap! Take a seat. I must have fallen asleep and had some beastly dream or something. Sit down."

He crossed to the wall near the fireplace and switched on some lights that illuminated the whole room. Then, seeing Meldrum for the first time, he advanced toward him and shook hands.

"It's not quite the right thing to steal into a man's house in his way, I know," said Meldrum. "I am sorry if we startled you. We rang and raised a rumpus down below, but without effect. I was taking a walk with Norton after the storm, and it occurred to him to come up and see you and apologize for his absence this evening. So we came together."

"It's quite all right," said Needham, in his peculiar nasal tones. "I am glad you came. I sleep pretty heavily and had a beastly dream just when you came in. I was back in Africa."

He was moving about as he spoke, placing a box of cigars, a bottle of whisky, some glasses and a siphon of soda-water on the table, and Meldrum observed him carefully. His peculiar build was not so noticeable when he was on his feet, the design of his loose tweed suit seeming to make him appear better proportioned. At times he looked almost handsome, but at other times, with a different perspective, the extraordinary length of his arms and legs was very apparent, while still another view made him appear almost grotesque, the singular shape of his small head, with its closely-cropped black hair, offending the sense of just proportions. His eyes were brown with muddy whites, and the sinister effect of his high cackling laugh (which was very frequent), accompanied as it was by a downward movement of his large hooked nose and an upward twist of his little black mustache, was not lost upon the observant teacher.

The room itself was dirty and untidy in the extreme. Stale tobacco fumes filled the air, and articles of wearing apparel were scattered around. Some unwashed dishes stood on a small table near the fireplace, and remnants of food lay on the floor. Books, papers and magazines were flung about in disorder and Needham's huge muddy boots lay where he had thrown them, below the chair on which Norton sat.

"What were you doing back in Africa?" asked Meldrum pleasantly, helping himself to a cigar.

"Back amongst those beastly baboons," said Needham, with his unpleasant laugh, at the same time proceeding to fill the glasses. "You know, I once ran into a bunch of them when I was out alone on a hunting trip, and I saw a curious sight. There was a big fight on among them—there would be about twenty of them, I should think.

I saw the whole business, and it was some fight, I can tell you. Rocks and chunks of wood were flying in all directions, and they were clubbing one another in great shape. As far as I could judge, they were roughly divided into two lots, but it was pretty much of a mix-up.

"But there was one old gray fellow that took my fancy rather. He seemed to be the chief egger-on. Whenever things looked like calming down a bit, he stirred them up again by means of a number of curious calls. I could not quite make out what part he was playing, or what side he favored, for he seemed to keep pretty well outside of the fight, only concerning himself with those that went down. He finished them up in the most methodical manner as they lay. And if two were attacking one he would throw himself in on the side of the two to help finish the odd fellow—and then he seemed to set the remaining two fighting one another I think he gave false signals at times. At any rate, he was the freshest of the three or four survivors when it was all over. And then they sat down and had a kind of powwow."

Norton glanced again at Meldrum, who smiled at him slightly, then said to Needham:

"Really? How very extraordinary that you should witness all this. Did they not attempt to molest you?"

"No," said Needham, with his evil smile. "They didn't attempt to interfere with us—didn't seem to mind me at all, which is rather unusual for them, for they are shy of humans as a rule. I stood on a big boulder and watched the whole business. The old chap had his eye on me, but either he understood firearms (I had my rifle and revolver, of course), or else I was lucky when I imitated some of his peculiar noises. He seemed quite scared when I came away with one of his favorite calls, and when they finally cleared out, after covering up the dead with branches and leaves, he gave me a most significant look—seeming to beg that I would not give him away.

"At least that's how it appealed to me. And, strangely enough, I was instrumental in capturing the very same animal later on, together with some others, during a hunt. I lured them to a certain spot by that very noise."

He had thrown himself down in his easy chair again, and as he laughed afresh his crooked yellow teeth uncovered, and his little eyes glittered unpleasantly. Meldrum was filled with a strong sense of repulsion.

"What was that particular noise like?" Norton struck in for the first time.

Needham put down his glass and, laying his head back slightly, made a peculiar kind of clucking gurgle in his throat. In an instant, from the corner behind Norton's chair, came a shrill chatter of terror, and a little red figure hurried across the floor and dived below the table. Norton almost dropped his glass, and Meldrum gave a startled exclamation. Needham alone was calm.

"Ah Fifi, you rascal!" he said. "Did I scare you again? That's too bad. Come here."

A small long-tailed monkey, clad in a little red jacket, came slowly from below the table and advanced timidly toward Needham, who spoke coaxingly to it, and finally made a kind of rippling noise with his tongue that seemed to reassure it, for it jumped on the arm of his chair and sat quietly blinking at the visitors. Needham tickled its head with his large forefinger.

"I bought Fifi from an Italian," he said, noting his guests' look of astonishment. "She is good company—catches flies, switches the lights on and off, and does other useful things—eh, Fifi?"

The little animal looked up at him intelligently, and with a sudden movement Needham wound his great fingers about its throat. With a plaintive cry, the little creature made futile efforts to tear away the strong hand about its neck, plucking frantically with its small paws.

"Don't!" said Norton in a sharp voice. "I can't bear to see animals tormented."

"I'm not hurting her," said Needham, removing his hand. "She's a nervous little thing and must be taught not to

be so frightened. I think the Italian must have ill-used her. But she is clever, for all that," continued Needham, laughing. "She is learning to play the piano."

Lifting the little monkey, crossed the room with long strides to the corner, where a small cottage piano stood, and seated himself on the stool. "Now play, Fifi," he said.

The intelligent creature leant forward and commenced striking sharply here and there among the notes, producing a curious kind of tinkling resemblance to certain bars from "Old Black Joe". Meldrum was conscious of a strange prickling sensation—he did not quite know why.

After a few moments, Needham rose again and, putting the monkey in a box in the corner of the room, returned again to his chair.

III

IT WAS late before the friends took their departure, Needham holding their interest with stories of his adventures in different parts of the world. Indeed, it was only when Meldrum became aware, by the restless movements of his friend, that Norton was not enjoying himself that he recollected the lateness of the hour and suggested it was time they took their leave.

"You fellows mustn't be too critical of my quarters, you know," said Needham, laughing, as they descended the stairs together. "I confess I am not a tidy person. I have led the rough bachelor life too long. But you fellows should understand something about that."

He accompanied them to the sidewalk, and after some desultory remarks about the weather, the visitors set off toward Norton's home. The moon was shining brightly and after the heavy rain and wind the air smelt fresh and moist. Meldrum inhaled it with evident pleasure.

"Now that I have seen your friend at close quarters," he said. "I must confess that I do not feel so strongly inclined in his favor. The state of that room was disgraceful even for a bachelor, and there is no excuse for anyone at all shutting out the fresh air. But, although his tastes seem to run unpleasantly to monkeys, I hardly think he deserves the appellation you bestowed on him."

"Perhaps not," said Norton, who seemed in better spirits, now that he was in the free fresh air again. "As far as the atmosphere of his house is concerned, he once explained that to me by saying that since he had been in Africa he had to keep the temperature up. I think he said he had rheumatism. But I don't like him."

There was silence for several minutes, and then he burst out:

"And of course he pays attention to Elsie."

"Ah!" said Meldrum significantly. "Perhaps a lover's jealousy has something to do with the case."

"We met him one day on Church Street," said Norton, "and of course I had to introduce him. He made himself very agreeable, and yet it seemed to my fancy that he was not so much taken up with the girl as anxious to do me an ill turn. Other fellows pay attention to her, too, of course, but that's because they admire her. It was not so in his case, I am convinced. After we left him Elsie said: 'What a fine-looking man!' And then she added: 'No he isn't—he's a horror!' "

"Well," said Meldrum heartily, "apparently you do not need to fear her falling in love with him, however it may be in his case. I really am afraid it's a case of 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.' Meldrum laughed. "But I hardly think," he wound up, "you have any solid grounds for quarreling with him. The world is wide enough to hold both of you."

Often in the days that followed, Meldrum, moved by a curiosity he could not quite account for, took his evening walk out on North Avenue past Needham's house. Of Needham himself he saw nothing. Once he heard the weird tinkling of the piano, but generally the form of the little monkey in its red jacket could be seen sitting motionless at the upper front window looking out on the street. It struck Meldrum as

strange that the creatures should sit so quietly. In the course of his progress past the house he did not observe it stir or alter its position. Its gaze seemed fixed on that point of the road where Meldrum fancied its master would first come into sight on his way home from town.

"Never knew they were such devoted things," Meldrum ruminated. "What a queer kind of a pet to keep! And what a queer life to live, anyway, alone in that house. He doesn't even get anyone to clean it up apparently. Some strange people in this old world!"

With this philosophical reflection, Meldrum passed on in the direction of the park.

Term examinations kept Meldrum busily occupied during the days that followed, and the friends did not have occasion to see one another for nearly two weeks. Then, when they did meet, it was again through the instrumentality of Needham, after the evening of the party at the Miner home. The Miners were neighbors of Norton's sweetheart and lived out some distance beyond Ethan Allen Park.

Thus it came about that after seeing his young lady to her home Norton found himself, some time after midnight, at a point perhaps a couple of miles from his rooms and with the aera of the Park lying almost directly between himself and his objective. He determined to cut across it, a thing he did quite frequently.

The night was cool and cloudy, with fitful bursts of moonlight which tended rather to accentuate the blackness of the intervening spells of darkness. Had Norton not been thoroughly familiar with the topography of the land he might have had some difficulty in keeping his direction. But he kept going forward confidently, noting certain well-known landmarks. He skirted the base of the hill on which the tower is situated, and was just on the point of plunging into a thick grove of trees, leading down toward the main gateway, when he chanced to look behind. And there he saw rather a disquieting sight.

The moon had just struggled through again and its pale light revealed to the apprehensive Norton the gigantic form of Needham perched on the top of a large boulder in a crouching position as if about to spring down. It might have been perhaps fifty yards from the spot where Norton stood. Even as he gazed Needham leapt down (from a height of some ten feet) and disappeared. Norton stood waiting, but there was no further sound. He walked on again, wondering uneasily what Needham might be doing in the park at such an hour—unless perhaps he, too, was taking a short cut. But Norton felt uneasy nevertheless.

Entering the grove he pushed forward briskly. It was very dark now, the moon being hidden once more, and the gloom and whispering of the trees made his flesh creep. Several times he looked behind him, but could see nothing. Then a crackling of branches, this time much nearer, brought him to a dead halt, and, facing about, he called loudly:

"Hello, Needham! Is that you?"

There was no response, and Norton stood with straining ears and eyes, his heart thumping in alarm. And even as he stood the horrible thing happened.

He was almost directly under a huge gnarled oak tree, and as he laid a hand on the trunk for a moment to steady himself he happened to glance up, and the hair bristled on his scalp to find a pair of luminous yellow eyes gazing down upon him.

Ere he could recover, a form seemed to detach itself from the shadows and a pair of great hands reached down and clutched at his throat, while a chuckling voice said:

"Aha! You would give me away, would you!"

IV.

IN HIS terror, Norton did what was possibly the best thing in the circumstances—fell to the ground. For this action seemed to upset the equilibrium of the figure in the tree (which seemed to be suspended by the lower limbs) and caused it to relax its hold and draw up its arms for an instant. And in that

instant Norton had recovered and was off, running as he had never run before, slipping, dashing, plunging, colliding, but never stopping and never looking back.

How he ever found his way out to the street was always a mystery to him, but he became aware, presently, that he was on North Avenue once more, and in the light of the first arc lamp he slowed down and finally stopped to recover. There was no sign of Needham, although Norton had heard him crashing along in pursuit.

Everything was still, and not a soul was in sight. Fear overcoming him again, Norton hurried on and did not stop until he was safe in his room and had locked the door. But he enjoyed little sleep during the remainder of that night.

Next evening Norton hastened to Meldrum's apartment and poured the whole story into his friend's sympathetic ear.

"You see," he said excitedly, "I was right about him, after all. He is a throw-back—he came at me from the trees. His instincts drove him there. Talking, too, about my giving him away! He knows I know what he is . . ."

"He possibly played a practical joke on you," said Meldrum cheerily. "He tried to give you a fright and succeeded. You called him, and he came—although not quite in the manner you expected, eh?"

"Well I am not such a nervous person as all that, either," said Norton. "I admit, however, that in sober daylight it does not look quite so bad. It did not seem like a joke at the time, though. I am convinced he meant me harm."

"I do not think you are justified in that belief, Harry," said Meldrum decisively. "The man is trying to be friendly to you and you keep rebuffing him. And as for 'giving him away' that's nonsense, and you know it. What have you to give away? Simply that you don't like him and have strange ideas about him? That won't hold water, you know. You had better forget your fancies and come along with me and see this new circus that has just struck the town. I notice by the placards they have some baboons and I am rather curious about the creatures since hearing Needham's stories. Come along! You need something to take you out of yourself. And if I were you I would not mention that business the next time you see Needham, unless he broaches the subject . . ."

Tasker's. "The Greatest Show on Earth," had pitched its camp some distance from the town over toward Winooski, and after a brisk walk the friends found themselves in the enclosure in which the curious were beginning to gather. There were the usual games of hazard, cocoanut shies, roundabouts, candy stalls, and side shows of all kinds clustered round the main tent, where the grand performance was held later in the evening. Presently they discovered the whereabouts of the baboons, which did not, when viewed, present quite the apeparance of the monstrous creatures portrayed in vivid colors on the outside of the tents.

Meldrum and Needham stood observing the animals in silence for some moments when Norton, happening to glance in the direction of the tent opening, saw the tall form of Needham in the act of paying his admission fee. Norton's heart beat faster with the recollection of his experience on the previous evening, but Needham smiled and waved a greeting, as if nothing unusual had happened. Norton turned again to the cage—to discover that there were others interested in the arrival of the newcomer.

There were three baboons in all, two apparently not yet full grown, and an old fellow of hoary aspect, who sat by himself for the most part near the front of the cage, watching the passers-by. He was treated with great respect by the two younger ones and was evidently still strong enough to be reckoned with. The old baboon had risen to its feet and was gazing intently at the approaching figure.

For some moments it stood thus, then, seizing the bars of the cage in its hands, it rattled the framework with tre-

mendous force, at the same time giving vent to a peculiar sound. At its cry, the other two ran forward and the extraordinary spectacle was seen of all three creatures staring fixedly at Needham as he made his way toward them.

There were not many people in the tent—the hour being early—but the few who were there turned toward the spot. Needham laughed and shook hands with Meldrum, at the same time waving one of his hands playfully in the direction of the old baboon. Like lightning, a long hairy arm shot forth toward him, but the distance was too great for the creature. Again it thundered on the bars.

"Hey Kruger, what's the matter now?" shouted an attendant, approaching. "Quit that! Do you want to bring the house down?"

He struck with a pole at the hands of the animal on the bars, making it shift them from place to place. But it was not to be driven back, and it still continued to stare at Needham.

The attendant drew away, saying in a sulky tone: "Don't meddle with the animals, please."

"It's all right, old chap," said Needham pleasantly. "He wanted to shake hands with me, but I declined with thanks."

"Don't do nothin' to annoy him, please," said the man in surly tones, preparing to depart. "God knows what might happen if he got loose. He did once, and we had a hell of a time. He nearly killed a man."

"Ah, *did* he?" said Needham, with interest. "He's pretty strong, I take it?"

"You can bet your sweet life he is!" the man called back over his shoulder. "We take no chances with him."

"By Jove!" said Needham, gazing at the baboon. "He's mighty like the old fellow in the fight I told you about, now that I look at him closely."

The three walked away from the spot at Meldrum's suggestion, but, looking back every now and then, the teacher noted, with some uneasiness, that the creature still retained its position and still followed Needham's figure with attentive eyes. There were a few other cages in the tent containing smaller monkeys and other animals and, having strolled past these, they soon found themselves once more opposite the baboons.

The place was now clearer than before, and Needham, glancing around to see that he was not observed, made a swift cross-wise motion with his hand and emitted the peculiar noise that Meldrum had heard him make on the night of their visit. Its effect was electrical. The two younger baboons, who had seat themselves near their older companion, ran at once to the back of the cage, where they cowered, whimpering and exhibiting every indication of alarm.

But the old baboon acted differently. The tension, which had up to this point kept its figure severely rigid, now relaxed. It squatted down on the floor of the cage and commenced nodding its head briskly up and down, its features distorted by what, to Meldrum's fancy, looked extraordinarily like a grin. Needham smiled, too, and, glancing from one to the other, Meldrum felt his flesh creep slightly.

"Let us go," he said hastily. "We have seen enough of these brutes."

Needham acquiesced, and they made their way to the exit.

V.

"BEASTLY clever things, though," said Needham, as they passed out into the clear night air. "And strong as the very devil. I think myself there is something in the old idea of the African natives that apes pretend not to understand speech for fear they should be made to work." He laughed his unpleasant laugh, and again Meldrum felt squeamish.

"You seem to have given them some study," said Meldrum, as they made their way toward the main tent.

"I have seen a good deal of them one way and another," said Needham carelessly, "and read a little, too. A curious thing I discovered was that when under the influence of liquor (and it's some sight to see, believe me!) they are peculiarly receptive to autosuggestion. I

believe a fortune could be made by putting them through tricks in this way—if the authorities allowed it. As for thieving, they would 'steal the milk out of your tea' as the old song says."

In the excitement of the extensive and elaborate circus performance provided by Tasker's Needham and Meldrum soon forgot about the baboons, and it was late in the evening when the three made their way back to Burlington. Emerging from Church Street, Norton and Meldrum turned up toward the University, while Needham strode off in the direction of the lake.

"Better lay aside your prejudice and think the best of the man," said Meldrum to Norton as they parted. "He is a mighty interesting fellow, and has a fund of knowledge that is remarkable."

Two days later found all Burlington in a state of excitement. Through a piece of carelessness the door of the baboon's cage had been left unlocked and the old gray baboon had made a successful dash for liberty and got clear away. It happened in the evening, and the fading light hampered pursuit. When last seen, the brute was heading away from Winooski toward the lake shore.

Search was kept up throughout the night without result, and then, next day, word came that the creature had been seen in a tree near the entrance to Ethan Allen Park. As soon as possible the entire park was surrounded, and a contracting circle of hunters and curious people scoured the woods and shrubbery, but apparently the animal had moved on again to fresh quarters.

Word was sent all over the surrounding countryside, and no effort was spared to locate the missing animal, but several days passed without result. Numerous stories got into circulation regarding supposed escapades on the part of the missing baboon, and there were no end of rumors as to its being seen—at one time on the railway near the freight yard, at another waving from the tower in the park; and, again, far along the lake shore. Nervous persons kept to busy thoroughfares after dark. But the actual whereabouts of the creature remained a mystery.

Fresh stories went around of stealthy prowlings round houses and mysterious rattling of doors in the small hours of the morning. Chancing to see some of this in one of the evening papers, Meldrum's attention was again drawn to the subject, and there returned to his mind his encounter with Needham at the circus. Obeying a sudden impulse, he set off in the direction of Needham's dwelling in North Avenue. He had not been near it for some time, but he found himself possessed of a curious desire to see whether the little monkey still sat looking out of the front window.

Walking sharply, Meldrum soon came in view of the quaint wooden house with its trees and grass plots. The sun had not yet set, and in the clear evening light Meldrum could see the small crouching figure sitting in its accustomed place. He stopped, as he reached the house, and stood watching a moment, and then, suddenly became petrified with astonishment.

For there came all at once into view, over and beyond the head of the small monkey, the great gray face of the old baboon with its long lips curled back and its doglike tusks displayed!

It gazed forth for an instant, seeming to hold back with one hand the lace curtain that overhung the window, and then disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Needham rubbed his eyes, then continued staring stupidly. The little monkey made no sign.

Thinking that perhaps the baboon had found its way into the house through an open window during Needham's absence, Meldrum felt that he ought to warn the South African, without delay, of his unpleasant visitor. He went up the path to the house and rang the bell. He thought that at the sound he detected a far off scampering, but no one came in answer to his summons. He tried the door and found it locked.

In some perplexity, Meldrum came down the garden path to the sidewalk, wondering exactly what course to pursue. He looked again at the window. The little monkey still sat gazing intently at the street. Of the baboon there was no sign.

"It may have been imagination," mused Meldrum. "But it looked uncommonly real."

He had turned his steps back in the direction of the town, and was meditating whether or not to communicate his fears to the authorities, when to his relief he saw the tall figure of Needham striding toward him. They stopped to greet one another, and Meldrum hastened to tell the other what he had seen.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Needham, his mustache twitching. "They don't come around houses like that—not in the day time, anyway. The place was all right at midday and has been locked up tight ever since. No; you must have imagined it."

He laughed lightly, and in a subconscious kind of way Meldrum seemed to get the impression that the tall man was more anxious to laugh the story off than to continue to discuss it. However, he offered to accompany Needham home and help search the house.

"Just wait there for a moment if you don't mind," said Needham (again with nervous haste, it seemed to Meldrum) "and I'll walk around and have a look at the windows. If they are all right I'll give you a wave."

He hastened off, and after a short interval again made his appearance at the front of the house and waved his hand. Meldrum waved back.

"Everything O. K.?" he asked.

"Quite O. K.," called Needham. "So long, old man. See you later."

Somewhat puzzled, Meldrum set off in the direction of the town.

On the evening of the next day the telephone in Meldrum's sitting room tinkled briskly and Norton's voice came over the line.

"Needham has just 'phoned down," he said, "and has asked me to go round to his place tonight to get some old African stamps he has hunted out for me. I once asked him if he had any and he promised to get me some. I wish now that I hadn't asked him."

He laughed rather nervously, and then added:

"I wish I'd just said 'no,' for I don't much want to go. However I promised to look in for a few minutes. Would you care to come along if I come round for you?"

"Too busy with examination papers just at the moment," said Meldrum, "and it would bring you out of your way to come over here. It's after eight o'clock now. I might be free about ten and pick you up when I take my usual stroll. How would that do?"

Norton said, "All right," and Meldrum hung up the receiver.

As he did so, a strange sense of foreboding came upon him and the vision of the baboon rushed back to his mind. He shook himself in annoyance and resumed his work.

But he could not regain his ease of mind, and after spending nearly an hour in a vain attempt to concentrate on some problems in algebra he closed up his books impatiently and sought his hat and coat.

He stood irresolutely in the hallway for some moments, and then, with a laugh, opened a drawer and drew forth a revolver, which he slipped into his overcoat pocket, after seeing that all its chambers were filled. He laughed again as he descended to the street, but drew some comfort, nevertheless, from the touch of the cold steel upon his hand.

VI.

THE night was dark, but the air was clear and invigorating. Meldrum walked smartly in a direction away from Needham's residence, since he was earlier than usual and had but plenty of time to meet Norton, finding that he could not free his mind from an unaccountable anxiety, he swung round presently and made his way to North Avenue.

It did not take him long to reach the house, and as he drew near he observed, with a slight feeling of surprise, that one of the downstairs rooms was illuminated—a room he had never yet seen lighted. It lay toward the rear of the house, its windows facing a broad gallery.

Obeying a sudden impulse, Meldrum, instead of going to the front door, walked quietly along the gallery and peeped through a corner of the blind

into the room. What he saw there made his blood run cold.

The room was about fifteen feet square, with blue paper on the walls and plain oak furniture. A square table stood in the center at which several figures were seated. Needham sat with his back to the window, and in the chair on his left sat Norton, a pile of postage stamps on the table before him, and over opposite Needham, directly facing the window, sat, or rather sprawled, the figure of the gray baboon!

On the table was a decanter of whisky, and all three had tumblers. Norton's glass was half empty, standing beside the postage stamps, but Needham and the creature were both drinking, the animal seemingly following the movements of the man, lifting the tumbler to its lips and setting it down again as Needham did, as far as Meldrum could judge by the movements of his right arm, which was visible. The brute's eyes were fixed upon the man across the table, and from its appearance and the limpness of its figure Meldrum decided it was in an advanced state of intoxication.

Norton seemed to be spell-bound, staring fixedly at the scene before him. Occasionally he passed his hand in a bewildered way over his forehead, or looked stupidly at the half empty tumbler before him. But he seemed incapable of either speech or action.

In horror and indignation, Meldrum continued to gaze. As fast as the baboon's whisky was gulped down Needham filled its glass again. From the fact that he did not fill his own very frequently, Meldrum concluded that he did not drink every time he pretended to do so—apparently deceiving the befuddled creature.

Like a flash, Meldrum remembered Needham's remark about the intoxicated baboon and autosuggestion. And with a fast beating heart he gripped his revolver and waited.

From being limp and sluggish, the ape now began to show signs of animation. It sat more erect, its eyes began to glitter, and occasionally it turned its head and gazed at Norton who still sat in apparent stupefaction. Every time it did this it seemed to grin at Needham with frightful suggestiveness, nodding its head as it had done when in the cage at the menagerie.

Fearing he knew not what mischief, Meldrum went quietly and hurriedly to the front door, opened it with extreme caution, and managed to make his way undetected to the door of the room in which the trio sat. Through the half open doorway, he could now get a view of Needham's face, and its diabolical contortions were dreadful to behold. It was apparent that he was working the animal up to something, but what that something was the creature apparently did not quite seem to grasp.

Presently Needham made the strange clucking noise in his throat, at the same time stretching out his arms toward Norton. That gave the brute its clue. It rose unsteadily to its feet, and turning its evil eyes toward the recumbent figure of Norton, seemed about to spring at his throat.

With a crash, Meldrum kicked open the door and entered the room, covering Needham with his revolver. The baboon, its attention distracted by the noise of Meldrum's entry and apparently finding Needham's influence withdrawn, now appeared to feel the full effect of the whisky fumes once more, and sank back into the armchair more fuddled than ever. Norton had by this time fallen back in his seat, his head tilted toward the ceiling. Needham, however, has its wits about him, and his ghastly yellow face, convulsed with fury, attempted to force a sickly smile.

"Needham," said Meldrum sternly, "I don't know what abominable deviltry you are up to, but it must stop here and now. If you can right things here go ahead. If not, I shoot—either you or the brute, I am not particular which."

Although outwardly calm, Meldrum's heart was beating furiously and he was hunting desperately in his mind for the proper way to handle the situation. It was not clear to him as yet.

"Why, Meldrum!" said Needham in a thick voice, cunningly feigning

(Continued on page 182)

The Eyrie

WEIRD TALES is not merely "another new magazine." It's a brand new type of new magazine—a sensational variation from the established rules that are supposed to govern magazine publishing.

WEIRD TALES, in a word, is unique. In no other publication will you find the sort of stories that WEIRD TALES offers in this issue—and will continue to offer in the issues to come. Such stories are tabooed elsewhere. We do not know why. People like to read this kind of fiction. There's no gainsaying that. Nor does the moral question of "good taste" present an obstacle. At any rate, the stories in this issue of WEIRD TALES will not offend one's moral sense, nor will the stories we've booked for subsequent issues. Some of them may horrify you: and others, perhaps, will make you gasp at their outlandish imagery; but none, we think, will leave you any the worse for having read it.

We do believe, however, that these stories will cause you to forget your surroundings—remove your mind from the humdrum affairs of the workaday world—and provide you with exhilarating diversion. And, after all, isn't that the fundamental purpose of fiction?

Our stories are unlike any you have ever read—or perhaps ever will read—in the other magazines. They are unusual, uncanny, unparalleled. We have no space in WEIRD TALES for the "average magazine story." Unless a story is an extraordinary thing, we won't consider it.

If the letters we have already received, and are still receiving (weeks before the magazine goes to press), are an augury of success, then WEIRD TALES is on the threshold of a tremendously prosperous career. Some of these letters are accompanied by subscriptions, others request advertising rates and specimen copies; all predict great things for us and express enthusiastic anticipation of "something different" in magazine fiction.

Anthony M. Rud, whose amazing novelette, "Ooze," appears in this issue, wrote to us as follows:

"Dear Mr. Baird: Delighted to hear that you contemplate WEIRD TALES! I hope you put it through—and without compromise. Stories of horror, of magic, of hypernatural experience, strike home zestfully to nine readers out of ten. There is no other magazine of this sort. Yarns somewhat of the type published in book form—for instance, 'The Grim Thirteen'—invariably are recommended from one reader to a fellow, with gusto.

"WEIRD TALES need not be immoral in slightest degree. Fact, ninety from one hundred generally contain wholesome moral, at least, derivable. Even studies of paranoia or fear hysteria, pure and simple, generally are clean from start to finish. The Poe type of yarn invariably makes me shiver—and then for a week I prefer the grape-nut road, shunning the dark places after curfew. But I come back avidly for more shock!

"I wrote a story 'way back in college days, which three editors have proclaimed the best horror yarn they have read. The story I have with me now. It has been most thoroughly declined—and now, myself, I see many amateurish spots. I cherish the yarn, however, for of all the millions of published words I have written I consider this idea and its development my most finished work.

"I'll write that story for you—thus far called 'The Square of Canvas'—again from start to finish, and polish it as I would polish a jewel. The amount of money involved is no spur; I'd like to have it printed, even gratis. My honest hunch is that, when all is said and done, you'll like this yarn as well as any of your choice five.

"Please put me down as a subscriber to the new magazine. I am buried deep in the heart of piney woods, 36 miles from the nearest news-stand selling even a Sunday paper, and I want to make sure of seeing each issue of WEIRD TALES.

"It's a corking title, and it will get all the boosting I can give. Herewith a clipping of my last platform appearance. I told 'em of the coming magazine, and that it offered a field of reading unique. At Atlanta and Montgomery, where I speak later in the winter, I'll give the sheet a hand. I have two more dates in Mobile, and I'll mention your project.

"In a month or so I'll fix up 'A Square of Canvas' and shoot it in for consideration for WEIRD TALES."

We got "A Square of Canvas" and promptly read it—and it will appear in the next issue of WEIRD TALES. Don't miss it! It's all that Mr. Rud says it is, and more besides! It's a terrifying, hair-raising tale, and no mistake! It's a bear! You can read it in twenty minutes, but those twenty minutes will fairly bristle!

Of "The Dead Man's Tale," which opens this issue, Willard E. Hawkins wrote us:

".....The idea for that story came to me in a flash one evening when my wife and I were returning from the theatre. I outlined the whole thing to her, and followed that outline without deviation in writing the story later. It struck me that I had never seen the Dr.-Jekyll-and-Mr.-Hyde type of situation developed from the point of the obsessing entity, and I was fascinated by the attempt to do it."

And we think you'll agree that Mr. Hawkins did a mighty fine job.

We assume you've read the stories in this, our first issue, before arriving upon this page back here, and we are eager to know what you think of them. Why not write and tell us? Mention the stories you liked, and those you didn't like, and tell us what you think of our attempt to do something new and different in the magazine field. We shall be delighted to hear from you; and we will print your letters on this page—unless you decree otherwise.

If you get the next issue of WEIRD TALES—as we hope you will—you'll read some strange and remarkable stories. Elsewhere in this number we've told you something about these stories, and we need only add here that each is a striking example of unusual fiction. Whatever effect they may have upon you—whether they make you shudder or set your nerves tingling pleasurably—we can emphatically promise you this:

You will not be bored!

THE EDITOR.

(Continued from page 179)
drunkenness, although he was perfectly sober. "What's all this? Revolvers? We are all friends. Norton had a drop too much—old man baboon dropped in and joined the party—I was going to get him to do some tricks. . . ."

"That's quite enough," said Meldrum sharply. "You are no more drunk than I am. Open that window and let Norton have some air. Loosen his collar—"

A sudden chattering caused him to pause and drew his attention for a moment to the mantel over the fireplace, on to which the little monkey had suddenly jumped from some nearby corner.

"Ha, Fifi!" said Needham quickly. "Lights!" The switch was within easy reach of the creature's hand, and in an instant the room was plunged in darkness.

The hallway being also without illumination, the blackness was profound. Utterly unable to tell what might happen, and fearing the baboon to be the principal danger point, Meldrum came to a swift decision and fired in the direction of the creature's chair. A frightful scream broke the silence followed by a wild gibbering, punctuated at times by what appeared to be Needham's voice shouting commands.

Then there came a loud crash of glass, as the table was overturned, followed by snarling, cursing and pandemonium. Stumbling blindly in the darkness, Meldrum endeavored, without success, to locate the switch in the hallway, but finally a faint glimmer showed him the outline of the front door, and he dashed forth into the street.

Several people had collected on hearing the shot, and aid was quickly forthcoming. Together with several neighbors and others, Meldrum again entered the house, and the light in the hall was turned on. The door of the occupied room had been swung shut and the dreadful snarling din still continued.

"The baboon must have broken in an attacked my friends," was Meldrum's hurried explanation, as they forced open the room door and finally got the lights turned on.

A hideous litter of broken furniture, pieces of glass, liquor, and bloodstains were everywhere revealed. Needham and the baboon, locked in a death grapple, were rolling among the ruins. By a curious chance, Norton's chair had been left standing, and he still sat there, limp and motionless, unaffected by all the noise.

With difficulty, the baboon was overpowered and secured. It was still bleeding copiously from the bullet wound in its shoulder, but it gnashed and tore at its captors with undiminished fury. Needham was bleeding from many wounds and presented a dreadful spectacle, much of his clothing being torn to shreds. In addition to receiving many cuts, he had been badly mauled by the infuriated animal, whose wrath, by some strange combination of circumstances, had been turned against himself. He sat breathing heavily, too exhausted to talk to those around him.

The removal of the animal drew off most of the curious and some sort of order was restored. Realizing that Norton had apparently been drugged, but not wishing just then to say anything of what he had seen, Meldrum made the plea that his friend had evidently been overcome as a result of the terrible scene he had just witnessed, and, procuring a cab, took him first to his own chambers and then to his home, where he was prostrated for some weeks as the result of the shock.

Needham disappeared almost immediately, and Norton's relatives did not deem it expedient to search for him. He was never heard of again in that city, and later it transpired that he had returned to Africa.

The baboon lived for some years after its strange adventure, but on dying it made no confession. And such mysteries as to how long it had been the guest of the South African, whether or not it was the same creature that he had once betrayed into captivity, to what extent the two understood one another, and whether or not it was incited to murder on that dreadful evening, were never solved.

And, indeed, nobody had any great desire that they should be.

A Dollar will put Yourself in Her Place

NO MATTER who you are or where you live; no matter what your circumstances may be or how little or how much you spend on clothes, I think I can make it all a little pleasanter, easier and more satisfactory in the future.

Whatever dreams of stylish clothes you may have, here is an opportunity to make your dream come true. However much you have ever admired some woman of your acquaintance for the clothes she wears, here is an opportunity for you without trouble or bother or extra expense to put yourself in her place.

One Example Among Thousands

On this page I show you a perfectly lovely little model in one of this season's newest fashions, exquisitely tailored in all-wool Panne Twill. It is a genuine style. And as you can guess it is One [illegible] you may wonder how you would look in her place. I'd love to actually put you in her place without promise or obligation, without expense or risk of any sort to you.

Pin a Dollar to the Coupon

For just one dollar with your request, I'll send you this dress, postage prepaid, in your own size, to examine as carefully as you please, to try on to your heart's content. The dollar that you send me brings the dress delivered to your home without any further payment unless, without the [illegible] of any kind you decide you want it and to keep it.

Take All Spring and Summer To Pay

If you find you cannot conveniently spare the $1.00 at once, I'll accept it in small payments if you prefer, or I'll allow you the whole season. Money is the last thing you really need to worry about, because if you are dissatisfied, you can pay balance of my bargain price almost as you please. I want you to spend the next year all this Spring and Summer, taking a full six months, paying little by little to suit yourself, entirely satisfied, earning a splendid name.

My whole business is conducted in exactly the same manner as this one example.

A Postal Card Brings My Free Style Book

This advertisement is intended simply as an example of my styles, my dresses, my credit and my terms. My newest Style Book shows thousands of beautiful fashions, wonderfully extensive departments in all lines of women's wear, as well as for the boys, little girls, misses and infants. It is by far the finest and largest book I have ever issued. It is merely inside the size of former seasons.

All Selections Sent Prepaid on Approval

With it, for a dollar or two, you can make every dress dream come true. Everything will be sent you postage prepaid on approval. There will never be any embarrassment or red tape. I always allow a full half year to pay. This being my greatest book, I anticipate a much larger demand than ever before, so please ask for your copy early. A post letter or a postcard is enough.

HERE ARE A FEW DEPARTMENTS:

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

All Wool Pairet Twill Dress

The fabric is all wool Pairet Twill exceptionally tailored. It is cut with an all-around flaring center of dainty lace. Elbow length bell sleeves have attractive knife pleated cuffs. A distinctive all around narrow self material belt, falling in ornaments in front, is ornamented with fancy metal buttons. Side pockets, pleated to match cuffs, drop loosely from the belt on either hip below the hem of skirt. Yoke embroidery of pearl grisette satin finish cotton that washes excellently. Dress shown at right with snap fasteners. Colors: Navy Blue only. Sizes: 6 [illegible] 14, 16, 18 and 20 years and Women's 32 to 44 bust measure.

ESC10 $1 with coupon, $3 monthly. $13.85

MARTHA LANE ADAMS CO.
3956 Mosprat Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

Martha Lane Adams Co.,
3956 Mosprat Street, Chicago, Ill.
I enclose $1. Send me on approval, postage prepaid, All Wool Pairet Twill Dress, No. ESC10, Size.....
If I am not delighted with this dress, I may return it and get my $1 back. Otherwise I will pay [illegible] monthly until total price, $13.85, is paid.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....State.....

The Ghost Guard

(Continued from page 64)

great hands grasped the bars and his two-hundred-and-fifty-pound bulk, clad in only a regulation undershirt, twitched, started and trembled from head to foot. A horrible fear distended his eyes, his teeth clicked together and the muscles of his face worked spasmodically.

"Sick, Hulsey?" the guard demanded, hardened to such nerve-shattering outbursts in a building full of tortured souls.

"I saw—I saw—" Hulsey began, his teeth chattering and rendering speech well-nigh impossible. "I saw—Oh, Mr. Hill, please give me a cellmate—*now, tonight!* I—I'm a sick man, Mr. Hill. Nerves all shot to pieces, I guess. Can't I have a cellmate to talk to, Mr. Hill?"

"What did you see?" the guard asked.

"He was standing right where you are now," Hulsey whispered hoarsely. "Pointing his finger at me, he was, when I opened my eyes and saw him. Smiling, too. I—I"—a violent shudder—"I could *see through him*, Mr. Hill; could see the bars on that window beyond him. I—"

"Who? See who?" the guard interrupted.

Hulsey seemed to realize, then, that he was talking too much; that he was not conducting himself as the hardest convict in the prison should.

"Why," he stammered, "I saw—I *thought* I saw—an old pal o' mine. He's been dead a long time. Nerves, I guess. Thinking too much about my old pal and the good old days. Nightmare, I guess."

"Yeah—nightmare is right!" the unsympathic guard growled. "But don't let another blat like that out of you, or we'll throw you into a padded cell. Got the whole wing stirred up. Get to bed now and forget that good old pal o' yours."

"If I only could!" Hulsey whispered huskily to himself, as he got back into the bunk.

TWO WEEKS passed.

There were no more outbursts from cell twenty-one. The "ghost tower" on the wall was silent, cold.

Then, at two o'clock one morning, Captain Dunlap saw the indicator move. It sickened him, made him wish ardently that he was a thousand miles from Granite River Prison.

The indicator moved slowly, hesitantly, to the left and the bell tinkled weakly. The captain placed the receiver to his ear, but no sound came; the line was dead. The indicator fell back to its original position as the captain replaced the receiver on the crotch.

A few minutes later the yard guard entered the lookout. Bill Wilton, the regular yard guard on the graveyard shift, was away on leave and the substitute guard was new at the prison.

"Didn't I understand you to say, Mr Dunlap," the new guard said, "that there was no one on Old Tower Number Three?"

"You sure did," Dunlap answered.

The guard pulled his left ear and looked puzzled.

"Funny," he finally remarked. "Was sure I heard somebody in that tower, singing soft and low like, when I passed under it a few minutes ago."

"What was he singing?" the captain asked, bending forward and fixing a penetrating gaze on the recent arrival at the prison.

"Let me see now," said the guard meditatively. "Couldn't make out much of the song. Something about 'when I die in the ocean deep,'—No, that wasn't it. 'When I die and am buried deep'—that's it. Then there was something in it about this dead guy coming back to ha'nt people, and a lot of bunk like that."

"I see," said Dunlap, as he eased himself out of the chair. "I'm going up and have a look around in that tower. You stay in here until I return."

Dunlap went outside the walls and up through New Tower Number Three,

(Continued on page 186)

America's Greatest Magazine of Detective Fiction

DETECTIVE TALES has leaped to a foremost place among the all-fiction magazines, and in its field it now ranks as the greatest of them all. In size and quality, no other publication of detective stories can compare with it. No other magazine offers such a quantity of high-grade detective fiction. Thrills, mystery, suspense, excitement — there's not a dull line in the entire magazine.

In the MARCH Issue

THE March issue of DETECTIVE TALES contains 192 pages of thrilling stories—novelettes, two-part tales and a tremendous number of shorter yarns—also special articles by experienced detectives and Secret Service agents, finger-print advice, a department of cryptography, and other live features. You will enjoy the March DETECTIVE TALES. It's amazingly good. Ask any news-dealer for a copy of

Detective Tales.

10 Lessons in
PUBLIC SPEAKING
FREE

Write quick—for particulars of this extraordinary offer; an offer you will never forget if you take advantage of it. Ten lessons in Public Speaking absolutely free to those who act promptly. We make this extraordinary offer to introduce our wonderful course in localities where it is not already known.

We teach you, by mail, to become a powerful and convincing talker and speaker—to dominate and control the decisions of one listener or an audience of a thousand. We have trained hundreds and helped them to increase their earnings and their popularity. Learn in your spare time, at home, how to overcome "stage-fright" and conquer fear of others; how to enlarge your vocabulary; how to develop self-confidence and the qualities of leadership; how to BUILD others by the power of your speech alone; how to train your memory. Our

New, Easy Method

perfected and taught by Prof. R. E. Pattison Kline, former dean of the Public Speaking Department of the Columbia College of Expression, can be learned in 15 minutes a day. Prof. Kline is one of the foremost authorities in the country on public speaking and mental development. Do not delay and miss this opportunity of a lifetime.

OFFER LIMITED SEND NO MONEY

This Special Offer of ten lessons free is made strictly for advertising purposes and will be withdrawn without notice. Write now, before it expires, and receive full particulars with enrollment blank by return mail. Just tear off and mail free coupon—or a postal.

North American Institute 3601 Michigan, Chicago, Ill., Dept. 4362

Send This
Free Lesson Coupon

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE,
Dept. 4362, 3601 Michigan, Chicago, Ill.

I am interested in your course in Effective Public Speaking and your offer of 10 lessons free. Please send full particulars. This request places me under no obligation of any kind.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....

State.....

(Continued from page 185)

where he questioned Guard Jim Humphrey. Humphrey had not seen or heard anything unusual in or about Old Tower Number Three.

Captain Dunlap, as he walked over the wall toward the ghost tower, admitted frankly to himself that he was "scared stiff." Pausing at the door, he glanced nervously through the window.

The yard lights lit up the interior of the tower sufficiently to assure him that no one—or "thing"—was inside. He unlocked the door and entered.

With a flashlight, he thoroughly examined the telephone. Dust had settled on the instrument. The receiver and the transmitter had apparently not been touched since Asa Shores left the tower. Dust had settled on the doorknobs inside. That the knobs had not been touched since Shores' death was obvious. The one chair, the window-sills, the small washstand and wash basin, all were covered with a thin, undisturbed film of fine dust.

There on the telephone battery box reposed Asa's old corncob pipe and, near it, a small box of matches. The window latches were just as Dunlap had left them when he closed and securely locked the tower a month before.

It was a puzzled and nervous prison official that left the tower, relocked the doors and returned to the inside lookout.

Next day Malcolm Hulsey, the "lifer" was admitted to the hospital. The doctor's diagnosis was "nervous breakdown."

BUT HULSEY, though his nerves were all shot to pieces, was still capable of shrewd plotting.

His admittance to the hospital had been hastened by a diet of soap. Hulsey was so anxious to get far away from Granite River Prison, and was so certain of his ability to do so if he could only be admitted to the hospital, that he had resorted to the old but effective expedient of soap eating.

Soap, taken internally in small doses, will produce various baffling and apparently serious physiological changes in the body. Hulsey looked sick and felt sick, but he was not dangerously ill.

For many months Malcolm Hulsey had been watching closely the movements of the night guards. During his stay in the hospital, while recovering from the gunshot wound in his shoulder, he had "doped out" a possible means of escape, and he was on the point of making the attempt when the doctor pronounced him sufficiently recovered to be returned to the cell-house.

The "lifer's" plan of escape was simply this: At midnight, while Captain Dunlap and his crew were on duty, the yard guard made his round, counted the patients in the hospital and left the yard through the guards' gate to eat his lunch in the guards' dining-room outside the walls. When the yard guard returned to the inside lookout he carried with him a hot lunch for Captain Dunlap.

In counting the men in the hospital the yard guard did not as a rule enter the building. He merely turned on the lights in the one large ward and looked through the window. The convict hospital nurse on night duty stood ready, and when the lights were turned on, proceeded from bed to bed and partly uncovered each patient so that the yard guard outside could see and count them.

There were several factors in Hulsey's favor now, one being that a new substitute guard was on duty over the guards' entrance gate during the absence of the regular guard who was away on vacation. There was only one patient in the hospital besides Hulsey. The yard guard must be lured into the hospital, overpowered, his uniform stripped from him, then Hulsey, garbed in the uniform, would attempt to deceive the guard at the gate and be given the keys.

At fifteen minutes to midnight, on Hulsey's first day in the hospital, the "lifer" quietly rose from his bed while the white-clad convict nurse's back was turned. Three minutes later the unsuspecting nurse had been neatly laid out from a well-directed blow behind the ear, bound with sheets, gagged, stripped of his white suit and tenderly tucked in the bed recently occupied by Mr. Malcolm Hulsey.

The other patient, a feeble old con-

SEND NO MONEY
20 SHOT AUTOMATIC PISTOL

$9.80
20 SHOT—25 CAL.

The biggest bargain ever offered. Built of best blue steel, checkered grip, safety. Everyone tested and inspected. Shoots all standard 25 cal. cartridges. 20 shot, with extra magazine, making 40 quick, hard and straight shots. Buy several while they last, at our unheard price. $9.80. (Regular $20.) (Postage extra, 25 cal. 7 cts., $7.10.)

SEND NO MONEY: Pay on arrival, our bargain price, plus a few cents postage. Satisfaction guaranteed, or money back. Order today. NOW.

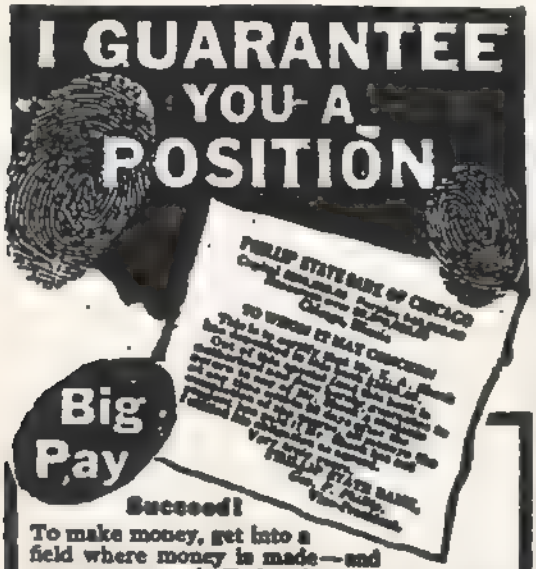
THE PRICE CUTTING CO.
New York

In The March
Detective Tales

3 New Series of Detective Stories

Each Story Complete In Itself

Don't Miss Them!



Succeed!

To make money, get into a field where money is made—and men are wanted. Today there is such a field—a big, profitable field that has been barely scratched. Men are succeeding in it and making money and uncounted opportunities for great success are still open. The Finger Print profession is the field that offers you this opportunity. Finger Printing is beyond the experimental. It is recognized as the one positive means of identification.

Be a Finger Print Expert

Finger Print Experts earn big money and occupy the responsible position of the professional men because their work is considerate and essential. There are no low-salary per diem drones in the Finger Print profession. Everything you do counts for yourself. Daily, just a handful of men are trying to answer the demands of the thousands and thousands of instances where the Finger Print Expert is vitally needed. Trained Finger Print Experts shine in big business, finance and importance. For years my time has been devoted to the Finger Print profession. I will teach you how to become a Finger Print Expert. My course of study is simple, easily understood and I guarantee to assist you in securing a position. Read the letter from the Philip Smith Bank. You can study during your spare time. No special education is needed. My unlimited contract outlines everything clear.

Secret Service Course FREE

In addition to my complete course in Finger Prints, I will also supply you free and prepaid extra charge, a complete course in Secret Service. Study of this will occupy you for advanced work. It gives you knowledge essential to the successful Finger Print Expert. Remember the course is free with my course in Finger Prints. It, alone, is worth the cost of any complete course in Finger Prints, but this offer, as is my Position offer and Free Professional Outfit offer, is limited. Men are needed at once. Unless you act at once, you may lose this remarkable free offer.

Actual Secret Service Reports FREE

To all who write for complete information at once, I will send, Free, copies of actual Secret Service reports. These reports give inside facts of important cases of interest to men. Read how these and my complete explanations as given, I will help you locate where you can secure as a Finger Print Expert and I will help you to succeed. Today—write for this information and my guaranteed position offer.

U. S. SCHOOL OF FINGER PRINTS
Dept. 1253, 7003 N. Clark St.
CHICAGO, U.S.A.

Send Coupon

U. S. SCHOOL OF FINGER PRINTS
Dept. 1253, 7003 N. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me Free information about your Finger Print Course, Free Course in Secret Service together with Guaranteed-Position Offer, Free Outfit, Secret Service Reports and Special Low Prices.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....Age.....

vict, was gagged and tied down in his bed with sheets. Hulsey then donned the nurse's white suit and, after arranging the nurse and the old convict in their beds so that they appeared to be sleeping peacefully, the "lifer" lay face down on the floor and awaited developments.

At twelve o'clock the new guard appeared at the hospital window and switched on the lights. Having counted the men in the hospital every hour since eight o'clock, the guard intended now to give the patients a hasty glance and proceed to the gate. There were his two patients, apparently sleeping peacefully. But where was the nurse?

Hulsey's heart pounded like a riveting hammer as he lay sprawled on the floor. Would the ruse work? Would the guard enter the hospital to investigate, or would he report to Captain Dunlap when he saw the white-clad figure on the floor?

The guard's eyes then rested on the man on the floor.

"Huh!" he ejaculated. "Funny place for nursie to be sleeping!"

But the nurse's sprawled form did not indicate slumber. The guard was puzzled. Perhaps the nurse had fainted, or fallen and hurt himself. The guard tapped on the window with a key. No answer, no movement of nurse or patients.

Then the unsuspecting "screw" locked the door and entered. An older guard would have reported to the Captain. He was in the act of bending over to turn the pseudo-nurse upon his back when his ankles were suddenly seized and his feet perked from under him.

The guard's head struck an iron bedstead as he fell, thus relieving Hulsey of the unpleasant job of beating him into unconsciousness.

Several minutes later the "lifer," wearing the guard's uniform, boldly approached the gate.

"What's on the menu tonight, Frank?" Hulsey casually asked, pulling his hat further down over his eyes.

"Same old thing—hash," the gate guard answered, as he lowered the keys.

(Continued on page 190)

GET THIS WONDERFUL RING. If You Can Tell It From a Genuine Diamond Send It Back

These wonderful, beautiful COSSIDITE (scientific name) rings are guaranteed to stand any test—even the diamond file test. They sparkle and flash with the same brilliancy and fire that a genuine diamond has. They are cut by the same experts and are guaranteed to hold their permanent brilliancy for years. Read this carefully.

Wear a Cossidite Diamond 7 Days Free

Make this test. You risk nothing. Wear a Cossidite ring on your finger for 7 days. If your friends can tell the difference, send it back; you won't owe us a thing; it won't cost you a penny. That's fair enough. If you keep the ring, the price is only as follows:

Men's Solitaire 14K Gold Ring	$2.85
Men's Initial Heavy Tailored Ring, Initial in Relief	$2.85
Men's Initial Massive Hexagon Onyx Ring	$2.85
Men's Initial Hand-Carved Initial Ring	$2.85
Ladies' Tiffany Style Diamond Engagement Ring	$2.85
Carat size ring	$2.85

Choice of initial on Signet ring engraved in back. Specify initial for your engagement. Handsome gift-boxed ring with each order.

SEND NO MONEY Just send paper ring as a measure, name, address and number of ring wanted and we will send it at once. Pay on arrival $2.85 plus postage. Wear ring 7 days. If not satisfied return ring and we will refund your money. Send paper ring with your order. Don't delay. Send today.

E. RICHWINE CO.
233 S. Dearborn St., Dept. 71, Chicago, Illinois

LEARN RADIO

Here's your opportunity. Radio needs you. Win success in this fascinating field. Trained men in demand at highest salaries. Learn at home, in your spare time.

Be a Radio Expert

I will train you, quickly and easily, to design, construct, install, operate, repair, maintain, and sell all forms of Radio apparatus. My new methods are the most successful in existence. Learn to earn

$1,800 to $10,000 a Year

FREE Wonderful, home-experiment, tube receiving set, of latest design. Write for "Radio Facts" free. Engineer Mahoney.

American Electrical Association
Dept. 17 4613 Ravenswood Ave., Chicago

FREE FOR 7 DAYS WEAR

ARABIAN GEMS DEFIES ALL OTHERS—THEIR BRILLIANCY ARE EVERLASTING

LOOKS, WEARS, LASTS AND OUTSHINES

Ladies' Special $2.75 Men's Special $3.25

WEAR AN ARABIAN DIAMOND 7 DAYS FREE

C. S. HOME COMPANY, Mfg. Jewelers
Dept. 121, Chicago

$1.00 BRINGS YOU THIS FINE GUN!

ORDER No. 3713

WESTERN SPECIAL

.32 or .38 CALIBER

A *real man's gun.* A hard hitting, straight shooter, 6 in. barrel top-break style with automatic shell ejector. American made, double action and special grips. Handsomely finished in fine blue steel. Protect yourself and home. Just mail a dollar bill and we will send you one at our *low bargain price.* Order NOW. Balance only $10.95 C.O.D. plus postage.

FREE GUN AND NOVELTY CATALOG

AMERICAN NOVELTY CO. - 2402-07 Archer Ave., CHICAGO

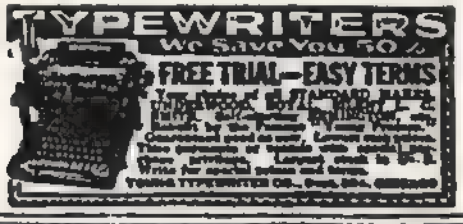
Good Luck and Happiness

I will tell you FREE Under which Zodiac Sign were you born? What are your opportunities in life, your future prospects, happiness in marriage, friends, enemies, success in all undertakings and many other vital questions as indicated by ASTROLOGY, the most ancient and interesting science of history?

Were you born under a lucky star? I will tell you free, the most interesting astrological interpretation of the Zodiac Sign you were born under.

Simply send me the exact date of your birth in your own handwriting. To cover cost of this notice and postage, enclose five cents in any form and your exact name and address. Your astrological interpretation will be written in plain language and sent to you securely sealed and postpaid. A great surprise awaits you!

Write me—TODAY—to the
ASTA STUDIO, Dept. 38, 360 Fifth Ave., New York



—If You Like Detective Fiction

You'll Enjoy

Detective Tales

GET A COPY *TODAY* FROM YOUR NEWSDEALER

(Continued from page 188)

Though the suspense, anxiety and uncertainty were terrible, Hulsey whistled calmly as he unlocked the first gate. The large bull lock on the outside gate was not so easily unlocked. Hulsey fumbled, his hands shook, his whistling, in spite of all he could do to keep it up, wheezed, went off key, then died in a discordant wail.

"Say!" the gate guard suddenly blurted. "Look up here!' By cracky, your actions don't look good to me."

HULSEY did not look up. He gave the key another frantic twist, and the lock opened.

In that short space of time the wall guard had raced into the lookout and seized a shotgun. As he stepped to the door of the lookout, a dark figure disappeared around the corner of a building twenty feet from the gate.

A moment later the alarm in the guards' quarters rang frantically, and a dozen sleepy-eyed men tumbled from their beds, slipped on shoes and trousers and ran out into the yard.

The gate guard could only tell where he last saw the escaping convict. To capture the man on such a dark night seemed hopeless, considering, too, that the fleeing man had a seven-minute start. However, the half-dressed guards scattered and made for a heavy willow thicket several hundred yards beyond the spot where the convict was last seen.

For five minutes after the pursuing guards disappeared in the darkness, silence reigned over the prison. Then—

From a distant point in the dark thicket a hair-raising, half-animal, half-human shriek of mortal terror shattered the stillness of the night and echoed and re-echoed about the high prison walls.

White faced guards, temporarily unnerved by that fearful wail, crashed through the brush, their flashlights playing about like the eyes of spending demons. Then they found Malcolm Hulsey the "lifer."

Groveling face down in the mud of a little creek bank, hands clutching at empty air, great spasms of maniacal

terror passing through his body, the one time terror of the prison muttered insane, incoherent things.

Two guards pulled him to his knees. Others turned flashlights on his face—a face such as is seen in horrible nightmares; a ghastly f... partly covered with black mud; a t...id face where it shown through the grime. The eyes were wide, protruding, glassy.

"See! See!" the convict rasped hoarsely, pointing a mud-smeared hand at a dense black nook in the thicket. *"See!* He stands there and points at me—and laughs! *It's Jed Shores!* He's been in my cell every night for weeks—laughing at me! He sang a death song to me—always sang—always laughed! Wouldn't let me sleep! *He's coming toward me! Stop him!* Please—"

Then another horrible shriek, a shudder, a gasp, and the guards dropped the lifeless form of Malcolm Hulsey in the mud.

By some queer whim of fate, the speechless guards involuntarily switched off their flashlights. Utter darkness, utter silence enveloped them. Then a faint sound was heard.

"Listen!" came the hoarse voice of Guard Jerry Clark. "Do you hear it?"

Very little of it could be heard. It was a faint sound and growing fainter.

"When I die and am buried deep,
I'll return at night to . . ."

Then it was gone, and all was still again.

60 Days' Trial

If you suffer from Debility, Nervousness, Insomnia, Lack of Vigor, Rheumatism, Lumbago, Lame Back, Poor Circulation, Dyspepsia, kidney, liver, bladder weakness, or any trouble due to low vitality, send for our Free Book telling all about the genuine Sanden Electric Belts and how they are sold on 60 days' trial with no cost to you unless you are absolutely satisfied. This is an opportunity you should not miss. You are fully insured against failure and take no risk whatever. The Sanden Hercules Belt is the best in the world and our offer is absolutely genuine. Write for Free Book today. Address
THE HERCULEX CO. 1116 Broadway, New York (Dept. O.)

Stop Using a Truss

FREE

TRIAL OF PLAPAO

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the parts securely in place. No straps or buckles attached—no obnoxious springs. Cannot chafe, no metal plate or pressure against the bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work and reported most obstinate cases cured. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending you Trial of Plapao absolutely free. Write today. PLAPAO LABORATORIES, No. 496 St. Louis, Mo.

ARE You Reading Mrs. HARRY PUGH SMITH'S *Latest Detective Stories*?
THEY ARE GOOD!
They Are Published In
Detective Tales

WANTED! U.S. RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS

Get $1600 to $2300 a Year

MEN—BOYS 17 OR OVER SHOULD MAIL COUPON IMMEDIATELY

STEADY WORK NO LAYOFFS
PAID VACATIONS

Common Education Sufficient
Travel—See Your Country at Big Pay

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. P251, ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Sirs: Send me, without charge, (1) sample Railway Mail Clerk Examination questions, (2) list of Government jobs obtainable, (3) Tell me how to get a U. S. Government job.

Name.....

Address.....

See How Easily You Can Learn to Dance This New Way

If you can do the step illustrated in the chart on the right, there is no reason why you cannot easily and quickly master all of the latest steps through Arthur Murray's method of teaching dancing right in your own home.

NO matter how skeptical you may be about being able to learn to dance by mail, this new course will quickly prove to you that you can easily learn without a teacher on the ground to direct your steps —and without music or partner—right at home.

Even if you don't know one dance step from another, these new diagrams and simple instructions will enable you to learn any of the newest dances in an amazingly short time. You don't need to leave your own room—it isn't necessary to go to a dancing class—or to pay large fees for private instruction. All you need to do is to follow the instructions as shown on the diagrams, practice the steps a few times to fix them in your memory and there is no reason why you should not be able to dance on any floor, to either band or phonograph music and to lead, follow, and balance correctly no matter how expert your partner may be.

Learn Any Dance in a Few Hours

Whether you want to learn the Fox Trot, One Step, Collège Rock, Conversation Walk, Waltz, or any of the newer steps you won't have the slightest difficulty in doing so through this new method. Then, the very next time dancing starts, you can surprise your friends by choosing a partner and stepping right out with perfect confidence that every step you make and every movement is absolutely correct. Arthur Murray guarantees to teach you or your lessons won't cost you one cent.

More than 90,000 people have learned to become perfect dancers by mail, about five thousand people a month are becoming wonderful dancers through Arthur Murray's amazing new method.

Do You Know

The Correct Dancing Position
How to Gain Confidence
How to Follow Successfully
How to Avoid Embarrassing Mistakes
The Art of Making Your Feet Look Attractive
The Correct Walk in the Fox Trot
The Basic Principles in Waltzing
How to Waltz Backward
The Secret of Leading
The Chasse in the Fox Trot
The Forward Waltz Step
How to Leave One Partner to Dance with Another
How to Learn and Also Teach Your Child to Dance
What the Advanced Teacher Should Know
How to Develop your Sense of Rhythm
Etiquette of the Ballroom

How to Prove That Arthur Murray Can Teach You to Dance in an Evening

Arthur Murray has consented, for a limited time only, to send a special 16-lesson course to every one who signs and returns the coupon.

You may keep this course for five days and test it for yourself. It must prove to you that you can quickly learn to dance in your own home without music or partner through Arthur Murray's methods or the test will cost you nothing.

FIRST PART of the Forward Waltz Step
1. Begin with left foot and step directly forward, weight on left foot.
2. Step diagonally forward to right, placing weight on right foot (see illustration).
3. Draw left foot up to right foot, weight on left.
That's all. Simply follow the numbers in the foot-prints. Master this part before going further.
START HERE

Arthur Murray is America's foremost authority on social dancing. In fact, dancing teachers the world over have been instructed by him.

Through his new improved method of dancing by mail, Mr. Murray will give you the same high-class instruction in your own home that you would receive if you took private lessons in his studio and paid his regular fee of $10.00 per lesson.

Special Proof Offer

Mr. Murray is eager to prove to you that he can quickly teach you to become a good dancer in your own home. Just fill in and mail the coupon—or a letter or postcard will do enclosing $1.00 in full payment—and the special course will be promptly mailed to you. Keep the course for five days. Practice all of the steps, learn everything these sixteen lessons can teach you and prove to your full satisfaction that you have found the quickest, easiest, and most delightful way to learn to dance. Then, within five days, if you desire, you may return the course and your dollar will be promptly returned to you.

To take advantage of this offer you must send the coupon today—offer may be withdrawn without notice. So mail coupon NOW.

Arthur Murray, Studio 652, 801 Madison Avenue, N. Y.

ARTHUR MURRAY, Studio 652, 801 Madison Ave., N. Y.

To prove that I can learn to dance at home in one evening, you may send me the sixteen-lesson course. I am enclosing $1.00 in full payment but it is understood that this is not to be considered a purchase unless the course in every way comes up to my expectations. If, within five days I decide to do so I may return the course and you will refund my money without question.

Name .....

Address .....

City..... State.....

(Price outside U. S. $1.10 cash with order.)

$90 Drafting Course FREE

There is such an urgent demand for practical, trained Draftsmen that I am making this special offer in order to enable deserving, ambitious and bright men to get into this line of work. I will teach you to become a Draftsman and Designer until you are **Drawing a salary of $250.00 a month.** You need not pay me for my personal instruction or for the complete set of instruments. **But you must take advantage of this special offer at once.**

$300 a Month Salary— $450 on the Side at Home!

Chief Draftsman Dobe

That's the kind of money my drafting students make. Read what this one says:

"As a beginner I am doing fine. Am earning a salary of $300 per month, besides I made over $450 at home the last two months, drawing plans for private parties. The practical drafting training you gave me by mail put me where I am in less than six month's study. Thank you for all your personal interest and help you gave me so far."

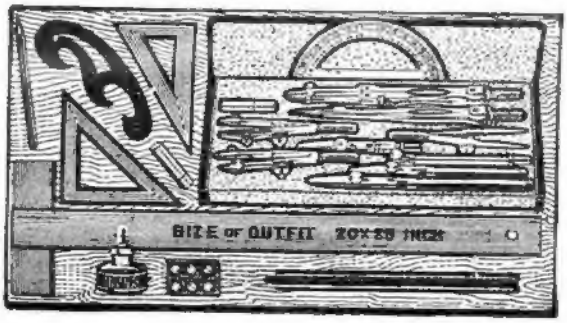
(*Signed*) *J. B.*

(Name and address upon request)

I Guarantee

To Train You Until You Are Placed in a Position Paying up to $250 and $300 a Month

Write and I'll tell you how I make you a first-class, big-money-earning draftsman in a very few months! I do this by a method no other man nor institution can imitate. I give you personal training at home by mail until you are actually placed in a position paying up to $250 and $300 a month. Six thousand draftsmen are wanted every month.



This Outfit FREE

And *more*—I give you a whole set of drafting tools the minute you become my student. You get every tool you need. A magnificent set of instruments which will build your success in draftsmanship.

Free Book

Send Coupon Today

No matter what plans you have for the future. Get this great book—"Successful Draftsmanship." Find out about the simply marvelous opportunities ahead now. How the world needs draftsmen, engineers, architects and builders. What great salaries and possibilities there are! Send coupon for free book today.

Chief Draftsman, Engineers Equipment Co.
1951 Lawrence Ave. Div. 14-59 Chicago, Ill.

Chief Draftsman, Engineers Equipment Co.
1951 Lawrence Ave. Div. 14-59 Chicago, Ill.

Without any obligation whatsoever, please mail your book, "Successful Draftsmanship", and full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to few students.

Name..... *Age*.....

Address.....

Post Office..... *State*.....

FREE!

Actual Reports of Secret Service Operator 38

HERE is something money can't buy. More fascinating than detective stories. Confidential reports of a real operator—No. 38—to his Secret Service Bureau, headed by the most famous detective in America. Absolutely Free. No cost. No obligation. Don't fail to send for them.

They may point the way to Big Money for you.

See how the modern detective works. Read these inside stories of the solution of great mysteries. See what possibilities this most fascinating and eventful of all professions offers to you—and how you may fit yourself for it.

Be a Finger Print Expert

To command the highest fees, the Secret Service man must also be a Finger Print Expert. These reports show why. This profession may be easily learned at home, in your spare time. Wonderful opportunity in this UNCROWDED, PROFITABLE field.

Make $5,000 to $10,000 a Year

The unfilled demand for trained Finger Print men is increasing daily. Opportunity is waiting for YOU. No time to lose. Send today for these reports, also our big Free book on Finger Prints. Gives all particulars and success stories of our graduates. Brilliant future ahead of you if you act now.

Special Offer-Limited Time

Everyone getting these Free Reports will also receive my Special Offer of a Professional Finger Print Outfit, absolutely Free. Made for limited time only. Send coupon today—sure. Reports, Finger Print Book, and special outfit offer, all Free and Prepaid. Don't delay, and perhaps forget. Do this right now.

T. G. COOKE, Pres., University of Applied Science
Dept. 1393 1920 Sunnyside Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

Cases of 12 Famous Finger Print Experts

Stories and pictures of *real* crimes solved by Finger Print evidence. Pictures and life stories of famous experts—many, graduates of my school. True facts, but better than fiction.

Also Sent Free

Send the Coupon →

T. G. COOKE, Pres., University of Applied Science
1920 Sunnyside Avenue, Dept. 1393, Chicago Illinois

Dear Mr. Cooke: Please send me FREE and prepaid, Reports of Operator 38, your new illustrated book on Crime and Crime Detection and your Special Outfit Offer. It is fully understood that I assume no obligation.

Name ..... *Age* .....

Address .....

Town ..... *State* .....

THE QUINN-BENNERRY CO